MENCKEN'S ART OF INVECTIVE ROBERT BOYD

THE NATION

AUGUST 30, 1975 50 cents

" HE HAPPENED TO WALK BY THE PRESIDENT "

Edward Pessen

Flouting the Founders
THE ARROGANT VETO

LATIN AMERICAN WEAPONS MARKET

How To Trigger an Arms Race

Michael T. Klare

TWO CASE HISTORIES

Inflation by Oligopoly

Bennett Harrison

DIGGING UP THE ROSE GARDEN

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EDITORIALS

Dangerous Deference

In his continuing effort to convince distraught Americans that their economic suffering is a precondition for their salvation by prosperity, President Ford has one consistent, if not fully witting, ally: the national news media—particularly the broadcasters. Since he is President, whatever Ford says or does is deemed newsworthy. National journalism, particularly that of broadcast and wire service reporters, is as hidebound by professional codes as any other craft, and one of the rules of the reportorial game is that any largely law-abiding tenant of the White House deserves big and deferential treatment. Broadcasters' normative demand for visually exciting footage reinforces this attitude. Ford *does* things (like visit foreign countries and ski), while his opponents are for the most part those dreaded talking heads.

J.F. terHorst, who served a brief stint as Ford's press secretary and should know about such matters, exaggerates only slightly when he notes that "When Ford coughs, fifty White House reporters race for the phones. . . . When Ford makes a speech, Walter Cronkite tells the nation, and Eric Sevareid weighs in with a commentary."

This, as terHorst and countless others have pointed out, gives Ford a decided edge in the approaching Presidential campaign. But this deference to and overcoverage of the incumbent President raise problems far broader than the electoral process. The Presidential advantage works at least as perniciously in the day-to-day making of law and policy in Washington.

Whether Ford is naive or a most clever charlatan in his reverse Robin Hood handouts to his big-business constituency is still unknown. But whatever his motives, he has been given a free pass to the airwaves and front pages of the nation. He may not have the control Richard Nixon was able to command until the networks pulled the plug on him, but his insidiously simplistic analyses are still rarely subjected to penetrating rebuttal and usually are transmitted to print and broadcast consumers with no adverse comment at all.

The corporate media have traditionally banned radical analyses from anything more than a novelty role in the national dialogue, but now even advocates of Johnson-Humphrey liberal economics are only occasionally heard in the daily broadcasts and most of the press. Much of First Amendment case law is based on the assumption that the public interest is best served by a wide proliferation of conflicting views. But the dominating media, which thrive on order, polish and a low attention span, tend to project a narrow definition of politics that emphasizes partisan conflict and gives at best a secondary role to all the rest. Politics is mostly covered as a sport—complete with two major teams, a variety of players who aspire to fame, many, many games that actually have only marginal significance and a world series every four years. Within this framework, coverage is balanced only when there are two identifiable team captains on which the media can concentrate. As it is, Ford of the GOP has been out-slugging all comers only because no formidable player has come to the fore to oppose him.

Politics determines who will live and how well within the limits of human control, issues at most tangential to the sportswriter's team orientation. The failure of the Democrats to produce an advocate (with something to say beyond the old homilies) has had a disabling effect on the never very high level of political dialogue in the country, but that does not forgive the media for becoming daily shills for Gerald Ford's reactionary program. Ethically and professionally (and, for individual broadcast stations, legally) it is incumbent upon the media to pass through divergent analyses of important controversial issues. If they must give deference to Ford's opinions, let them at least try to provide some semblance of balance. The next few years will be exceptionally critical ones for Americans. Difficult and costly choices will have to be made. Allowing one man to push unchallenged his plutocratic policy, sugar-coated with patriotism, just because he was hand-picked by his discredited predecessor and so far seems to be without particular guile, is a national disservice. Opponents of Ford's stacked deal deserve regular access to the media; they should fight for it until they win. The consequences of their loss could be staggering.

Money Politics

Gerald Ford and the interests he represents have reached a crucial point in their journey toward consolidation of power in 1976. Economic energy policies (including *laissez faire*) which have stagnated due to Ford's rock-ribbed conservatism and the Congressional Democrats' inability to advance and pass a progressive, alternative program will be rapidly implemented in the next few months. World and national economic events which demand a response will receive none and the monopolists' free market, coupled with the Federal Reserve Board's tight-money policies, will intensify the economic dislocation.

The conventional economic wisdom at this point is that the economy has begun to turn around; that, with inflation still cooling, moderate growth without double-digit price increases will be possible. That is precisely what Ford wants: to be able to convince the American people that his program has produced some improvement in the stagflated economy he inherited from his predecessor.

But the conventional economic wisdom, as it often does, ignores the forces that govern Ford's economic program and their power to redislocate the economy for private, selfish reasons. Barring a *deus ex machina*, domestic oil prices will be decontrolled at the end of this month. Just what that will mean in economic terms is unclear. As Edwin L. Dale Jr. wrote in the August 17th *New York Times*, the result will depend on whether President Ford tries to make his $2-a-barrel import fee stick at a higher court level, whether the OPEC nations raise prices at their September meeting and whether Congress passes a windfall tax on the oil producers or otherwise decides to restore part of the purchasing power lost when oil prices are decontrolled.

Yet another factor—and a big one—will be the greed of the oil companies, restrained only by their fear of provoking public outrage. While they no doubt would like to accelerate their gouging of the American consumer, appre-

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hension that Congress this time will take decisive action against them—as it has yet to do—might make them join Union Oil's somewhat qualified pledge to limit further price hikes until 1976 to 2 cents a gallon. Industry representatives, according to a *Times* report written more recently than Dale's, are predicting an immediate jump of 3 cents to 3.5 cents a gallon, with market forces supposedly governing further increases. William J. Burhop, a Ralph Nader lobbyist, predicts that decontrol will cost each family of four $900 a year, once the increases have multiplied throughout the economy. A Library of Congress study, commissioned by Senators Kennedy and Hollings, predicted that unemployment would jump from one-half to a full percentage point (meaning almost another 1 million out of work), assuming retention of the $2 fee and enactment of a windfall-profits tax. In 1976, the study said, decontrol (of coal and natural gas as well as of oil) would cost consumers $26.7 billion, of which a windfall tax would return only about $12.3 billion. Further setbacks for key sectors of the economy—from housing to automobiles—seem probable as consumers turn more of their incomes over to the oil companies (and those concerns who use their products) and have less money to spend in the marketplace.

Ray Howard writes in the New York *Daily News* that even if there is some recovery "our giant corporations are salivating over the prospect of biting off chunks of it with price increases. But if they all bite, there will be little recovery left because the resulting inflation will drain away purchasing power and lead to another economic downturn."

Howard reports that "big industry seems to have abandoned the free-enterprise pricing system" and is turning toward "cost justified" pricing, a cost-plus determination that ignores market conditions. Radical economists have been saying for quite awhile now that shared monopolies work that way. Autos, aluminum and steel are all going up despite weak markets.

After a year in office, Ford still convinces most people that he is honest. Actually, he has managed so to mystify his economic program with bogus free-enterprise rhetoric that its essence has been disguised. Wanton price hikes seem anarchic only if they are unanticipated. By tightening the money supply, increasing the national debt by up to $90 billion this year, and thus hiking substantially the costs of money to American consumers. Arthur Burns and Ford have made all but the very rich and the wage-indexed less well off. By raising their prices far beyond what justice—or the "free market"—allows, big business and big energy have further fleeced the American consumer. Ford allowed the taxpayers a rebate and a small cut, but this money has been, and will be, confiscated in the form of higher prices and interest rates. He has followed the basic plan initiated by his predecessor when he first froze wages and prices in 1971 and then allowed the latter to rise. In New York the banks are doing battle with strong municipal labor unions and winning. In most of the rest of America, the rich and the indexed workers are thriving, while the less fortunate pay for it. The response is still latent, largely unorganized, and will remain so until large numbers of Americans have seen what lies behind Gerald Ford's smile.

IN THIS ISSUE

August 30, 1975

EDITORIALS

130

ARTICLES

133 Flouting the Founders: The Arrogant Veto — *Edward Pessen*

137 Latin American Weapons Market: How to Trigger an Arms Race — *Michael T. Klare*

142 Digging Up the Rose Garden: McCarthy Challenges the System — *Jim Castelli*

145 Two Case Histories: Inflation by Oligopoly — *Bennett Harrison*

BOOKS & THE ARTS

149 Kolko: America and the Crisis of World Capitalism — *James M. Cypher*

150 Mole (poem) — *Thomas Johnson*

151 Hobson: Serpent in Eden — *Robert Boyd*

151 On Women Writers — *Constance Ayers Denne* and *Katharine M. Rogers*

153 Book Marks — *Carey McWilliams*

154 Films — *Robert Hatch*

156 Theatre — *Harold Clurman*

158 Art — *Lawrence Alloway*

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'Anti-Communism' Revisited

Sixteen of the twenty-one members of the OAS—including this country—have in effect voted to abolish the embargo imposed eleven years ago upon Cuba. Each member nation will now be free to determine how it proposes to deal with Cuba (seven members have continued diplomatic and trade relations in defiance of the ban). While the latest action does not mean that Washington is about to recognize the Castro regime, normalization of relations should follow in time.

The diplomatic costs of this country's frenetic decade-long campaign to isolate Cuba—what Sen. George McGovern in his first speech in the Senate in 1963 characterized as our "dangerous Castro fixation"—would be difficult to estimate. It can be argued that the Bay of Pigs invasion pushed Castro into the arms of the Soviets and led to the missile crisis. The feverish attempt to keep the infection of socialism from spreading from Cuba to Central and South America involved this country in covert activities of a kind that will embarrass American diplomacy for years to come. The result has been not merely to give the CIA a bad name throughout the hemisphere but to identify this country's diplomacy with American corporate interests and the more reactionary elements in Central and South America who were delighted to support a policy of "anti-communism." It will be years before the phrase "labor attaché" loses its current connotation of "CIA agent." Missionary groups, both Protestant and Catholic, have been embarrassed by disclosures of the close ties certain missionaries have had with the CIA. Representatives of American business will be eyed with some care by those who now see undercover agents in almost any American-related enterprise. Local politicians who adopt a friendly attitude toward the United States will invite curiosity as to possible payoffs, just as any sign of friendliness on the part of the local press will give rise to thoughts of subsidies.

As against these and other deficits it is difficult to see any offsetting gains. The great "anti-Castro" campaign was bankrupt from the start. Fortunately, American business has few ideological hang-ups. Now that more foreign trade is eagerly sought—even the trade of a small nation—corporate America is willing to forgive and forget. *The Wall Street Journal* recently published a roundup of American corporate executive opinion which clearly indicated a lively interest in resumption of U.S.-Cuban trade; the same report said that inquiries to the State Department about the possibilities of trade had multiplied since the depression set in.

While it will not be easy to resume relations with Cuba, the prospects are improving and the decade-long detour is nearly at an end. If American businessmen are interested in improved relations, as they seem to be, relations will improve, for "business" is the magnet that guides American diplomacy. Castro also appears to be interested in better relations, despite numerous CIA attempts to bump him off. That these ambushes had high-level authorization has not been established—the doctrine of "deniability" always protects top officials—but they did occur. Some politicians and elements of the press would like to involve the Kennedy brothers in the attempts, which is unfair since they cannot be heard in their own defense. But it should be said, for the record, that this country's overreaction to the Bay of Pigs fiasco—a project that should never have been countenanced—while understandable, was a factor in triggering the grand crusade against Castro that has proved so costly and self-defeating. When Robert Kennedy was named Attorney General, *The Nation* expressed some concern that his disposition to pursue "enemies" to the bitter end, and often by unfair methods, might well have disqualified him for that particular post. We suggested that he might compromise the new Administration if he continued to show the same zeal and personal animus that he had shown, for example, as counsel for the McClellan Committee. And we quoted Ambrose Bierce, who once defined zeal as "a certain nervous disorder afflicting the young and inexperienced. A passion that goeth before a sprawl" (*The Nation*, December 31, 1960).

Untrustworthy Trustbusters

The Justice Department's antitrust case against IBM finally opened in New York this spring after more than six years of delay. The government says it wants IBM broken up into smaller companies in order to facilitate competition in the computer business. But, as William Rodgers reports in a recent issue of *Washington Watch*, "the present antitrust case against IBM . . . is a charade." Author of *Think: A Biography of the Watsons and IBM*, Rodgers has been following the case closely. What he has seen further demolishes the myth of governmental trustbusting.

Rodgers says the case might have begun as a serious prosecution in 1969 as a parting shot from the Johnson administration. Announcement of the suit was one of the high points of Nicholas Katzenbach's attorney generalship. Katzenbach is now chief counsel for IBM.

His successors, John Mitchell and Richard Kleindienst, showed no proclivities for pushing the case; IBM seems to have done what it could to delay action even further. Among other delaying tactics, Rodgers reports, IBM gave the Justice Department documents that were illegible. The company risked a $150,000-a-day fine rather than turn over 700 specific documents, as Judge David Edelstein had ordered. Most outrageously, company lawyers in January 1973 oversaw the destruction of what Rodgers says was "a vast quantity of tapes, microfilm, documents and working papers," despite Edelstein's earlier order: "I don't want a single document destroyed under any circumstances without the consent of this court."

This stalling and possible obstruction of justice has so far gone largely unpunished. "A key strategy of a corporate defendant of this size in antitrust cases is the strategy of attrition," Rodgers notes. The Justice Department has only limited funds and resources to fight the case; delays are significantly costly and disabling. As Rodgers says, "IBM has *many times more money than the Justice Department has*, and can command the expertise of vastly greater research and specialists' resources." [Emphasis in original.] Even if the Ford Administration were committed to vigorous antitrust prosecution, and that seems quite arguable, its antitrust team as currently funded is no match for IBM. Fines don't matter. Stretches in jail might halt the company's hanky-panky and get the case started, but few if any Wall Street lawyers or their clients have been sent to jail for contempt.

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Compelling arguments can be made against the efficacy of antitrust policy, even if it were successfully pursued, but as yet vigorous prosecution has not been given a decent chance. Instead, we're given prolonged fencing matches that cost the taxpayers money and take attention away from genuine problems of concentrated class wealth and control in America. If his Administration isn't serious about taking on IBM and other corporate monopolies, Ford should say so and shed his "free-enterprise" mask. Corporate criminals should be treated as such.

Yet, as Christopher Stone pointed out in *The Nation* of August 2, affixing criminal culpability within the bureaucratically dense corporate structure is difficult—even if federal prosecutors were ordered to try. Beyond that, he noted, the American criminal justice system has not been disposed to put members of the corporate elite behind bars except for cases involving rare, headline-grabbing crimes. The problem seems to be more in the administration of the law than the law itself—though white-collar penalties should be stiffened and, as Stone recommends, tough laws requiring specific, internal corporate responsibilities should be enacted.

Many criminologists say the best deterrent is that which is swift and certain. If they are right, corporate criminals might be curbed with proper prosecution. That they have not been, and that the Administration continues to prattle on about its commitment to antitrust and free enterprise, constitutes a strong indictment of its sense of justice and a sobering indication of the merely symbolic nature of much reformist law.

The Raider

Try saying it to yourself—"Ralph Nader for President." It's a phrase that sparks on the tongue; it peps you up, like a sudden shower on a muggy afternoon. So before dismissing it as a wistful dream, consider. . . .

An organization in California, The Draft Nader for President Club of Los Angeles, is beating this drum and has come up with some interesting facts. Last November, when the tide of 1976 was just beginning to be felt, the Gallup poll ran a name-awareness, or popularity, survey of thirty-one Democrats who had been mentioned as Presidential possibilities. Nader placed fifth—ahead of Eugene McCarthy, Morris Udall and Henry Jackson. An earlier Drummond poll, asking "What kind of President do you want in 1976?" placed Nader among the top ten, ahead of Kennedy, Wallace and Muskie.

Not being a politician, Ralph Nader did not see this sort of response as a reason to jump upon a horse and start whooping it up across the country. Indeed, his greatest handicap as a candidate is that he has never shown the faintest sign of wanting to be President. But once an idea like this gets rolling, and the Los Angeles group is pushing hard, it can gain momentum very rapidly. And Nader is not a man to turn his back on a job that needs to be done, if he is qualified to do it.

And what qualifications does he have? He is a man of enormous energy, with an uncanny gift for getting people to dedicate themselves to the goals he envisions, a firm belief in the basic institutions of democracy and a determination to make them work. He is beholden to no one and, the record shows, afraid of no one. What his foreign policy would be we do not know, but it is unlikely that he is without one. It is also true that he has never run for office and some experience in politics is thought to be a prerequisite for the job—with the less than satisfactory result that we invariably get hardened politicians in the White House.

It is hard to estimate what a campaign would cost Nader in energy and money, but the public could hardly fail to be the gainer. If he won, it might be a new beginning for the country, but win or lose, he could not fail to raise the level of the upcoming race. Norman Thomas was a perennial Presidential candidate who never came close to winning. But it is hard to say that he lost, since virtually everything he ever proposed in his campaigns has by now become part of the law of the land. Try it again: "Nader for President."

FLOUTING THE FOUNDERS

THE ARROGANT VETO

EDWARD PESSEN

The Presidential veto today plagues the United States. On June 25 the House of Representatives fell sixteen votes short of overriding Gerald Ford's veto of an emergency housing bill that promised to create 800,000 jobs and was supported by leaders of the housing industry and labor. In recent months the Congress has failed to override Presidential vetoes of a farm bill, a bill to create public service jobs and a bill to regulate strip mining of coal, the last failing by only three votes to achieve the two-thirds needed to override.

The most powerful nation in the world, bogged down in an economic crisis that finds more than 8 million of its citizens unable to find work, presents the strange spectacle of one man, a nonelected Chief Executive, blocking recovery measures that are supported overwhelmingly by its elected national legislature. Amazingly, the majority party in opposition responds not by challenging what Woodrow Wilson once described as this "hindering and thwarting" device, but by preparing to make hay at the polls in November 1976 on the issue of Presidential obstructionism. As the informed Washington correspondent, Clayton Fritchey, recently asked: "Can the country wait until after the 1976 elections for the deadlock to be resolved?"

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To do him justice, one Democrat has had the audacity to challenge the Presidential veto head-on. On June 25, the day when the House failed to override the veto of the housing bill, Rep. Jonathan B. Bingham of the Bronx proposed that Congress consider amending the Constitution to reduce the power of unelected or appointed Presidents by stipulating that only a three-fifths rather than two-thirds vote be required to override their vetoes. Mr. Bingham is under no illusion about his proposal's chance of success. His legislative assistant David Rosen informs me that Bingham did not solicit the co-sponsorship in framing his proposal that he would have sought were it capable of attracting serious support. It is frankly a political measure, designed to put heat on a nonelected President who, as described in the press release issued by Bingham's office, offers the people only "empty assurances that things are getting better." Congressional awe of the veto appears to be so great that even this timid attempt to water down the power of rare, nonelected Presidents has led Mr. Bingham's advisers, friends and colleagues to say he is "absolutely crazy to think of modifying the veto at all."

The Senate has recently been making some stir over the veto clause in Article I, Section 7 of the Constitution, but only on the procedural question of whether a bill can be pocket vetoed when not returned with the President's signature within ten days of an interim recess, as under the Constitution it can be so vetoed when not returned within ten days of "adjournment." It can reasonably be argued that if Congress wishes to avoid a pocket veto of significant measures, it can do so by making certain to enact them well before adjournment. The two-thirds requirement is the great obstacle to be surmounted, since in its entire history Congress has overriden only 3 per cent of the more than 2,000 bills vetoed by the Presidents.

Why is the veto power not frontally attacked? How did this anomalous power, which makes of the President the equal of the Chief Executive plus approximately ninety Congressmen, come to pass under a system of government that prides itself on the "separation of powers"?

The Constitution is a revered document but not a sacred one; we have amended it twenty-five times. The men who created it, though a brilliant assemblage, were not incapable of confusion and ineptness. For example, it took the Twelfth Amendment to correct the monumental gaffe they committed when providing for the counting of Presidential and Vice Presidential votes. As I shall try to show, the veto clause in the Constitution is so sparsely written that it left itself open to later abuses that flagrantly contradicted the stated intentions of the founding fathers.

The veto power as exercised by Ford, Nixon, Johnson and almost all Presidents since Andrew Jackson is utterly at odds with the intentions of the men whose names and prestige are now invoked to justify the modern misuses of the power. The authors of the Constitution went to great pains, both within the halls where the Constitutional Convention met from May to September in 1787 and outside them, to assure the people that the Presidential veto would be rarely exercised. James Madison, the "Father of the Constitution," told the Convention that the object of the veto power was twofold: to protect the Executive Office from attack and to prevent flagrant injustice. In the 73rd essay of the *Federalist* papers, the most authoritative interpretation of the veto power written by one of its creators, Alexander Hamilton, explained that its primary aim was to "enable the executive to defend himself against Congressional encroachment." The secondary purpose, he wrote, was to protect the community against "improper" laws. (The greatest authority on the Presidency, Edward S. Corwin, has written that the fathers believed "the President ought to reserve his veto power for measures which he deemed to be unconstitutional.")

In issuing these reassurances the fathers were guided by realism as well as by their sincere convictions. They knew that the veto power would be regarded with great suspicion, if not bitterly opposed, by a people so sensitive and hostile to "despotism" as were Americans. The idea of the veto derived, after all, from the hated British monarchy. Within the Convention itself, Benjamin Franklin, Pierce Butler and Roger Sherman expressed fear that the veto would lead to "abuse of the executive power." George Mason, champion of a bill of rights, charged that "the negative power in the executive" did "not accord with the genius of the [American] people." From the storm of controversy that broke out in the states over ratification of the Constitution, it seems clear that Mason had a point. Yet whether the veto power was popular or not, the fact remains that the fathers did insist on its inclusion—even if they did promise that its exercise would be sparing. They did so, in the words of Gouverneur Morris, so that the Executive could achieve its "great object . . . to control the legislature."

The founding fathers were not democrats. They met when "Shays' Rebellion" in Massachusetts had filled George Washington and other delegates with the fear that masses of discontented debtor farmers elsewhere were on the verge of attacking property and good order. Even delegates who ultimately opposed the finished Constitution as too coercive and despotic agreed that the majority had to be restrained. "The worst of all political evils," was Elbridge Gerry's dismissal of democracy. Our great weakness, agreed George Mason, was that "we had been too democratic." The dominating Madison proclaimed the need to create a government that would "protect the minority of the opulent against the majority." These men viewed the veto as one of the important weapons by which the (originally) undemocratically selected Chief Executive could protect his powers against possible attack from the one democratic branch written into the original Constitution.

The founders' position toward the veto, in summary, was this: when used, they expected it to be seldom overridden. On June 4 they peremptorily dismissed the absolute veto, both because they knew it too closely resembled the royal negative and was therefore doomed to defeat and because in their judgment it was not necessary. They anticipated that the two-thirds vote to override would make the veto close to absolute: the record of 97 per cent failures to override confirms their acuity.

But at the same time these men also expected that the veto would be rarely used and then only for the limited purposes cited by Madison and Hamilton: protection of the integrity of the Presidential office and rejection of fla-

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grantly unconstitutional legislation. True, the language of the completed Constitution does not state these limitations. The President, it says, is required to return a bill he does not approve "with his objections, to that house in which it shall have originated." However, both the words and the deeds of the first six Presidents show that they understood the veto power to be the limited one promised by Madison at Philadelphia and Hamilton in *The Federalist*.

Between 1789 and 1829 there were only ten Presidential vetoes, all but three on the ground of unconstitutionality. Washington stated his position clearly in a letter to a friend: "From motives of respect to the Legislature (and I might add from my interpretation of the Constitution) I gave my signature to many bills with which my judgment is at variance." It is a tribute to the good sense, integrity and decent respect to the opinion of his people that the father of our country, for all his suspicion of democracy, never dreamed of puffing up his powers by vetoing legislation that, were he a legislator, he would have voted against. Washington understood that the President was not a legislator and that he and his colleagues who made the Constitution did not intend him to be. Jefferson had not been at Philadelphia but he supported the handiwork of those who were. As President, he vetoed no measures, in part because he believed that "a just respect to the wisdom of the legislature" required a President to exercise the veto power only when his mind was made up that a particular bill was "unauthorized by the Constitution." The sixth President, John Quincy Adams, like his father, the second President, vetoed no legislation. The younger Adams believed that the Presidential veto should be "exercised with great reserve."

Then came Andrew Jackson and the deluge.

It is surely one of the great ironies of American history that it was Andrew Jackson, the vaunted "champion of the common man," who made sweeping use of a power that the "Virginia dynasty" and the "aristocratic" Adamses had hesitated to use because of its admittedly undemocratic character. Jackson vetoed more bills than did all previous Presidents combined and he did so more often than not on grounds of expediency and personal policy.

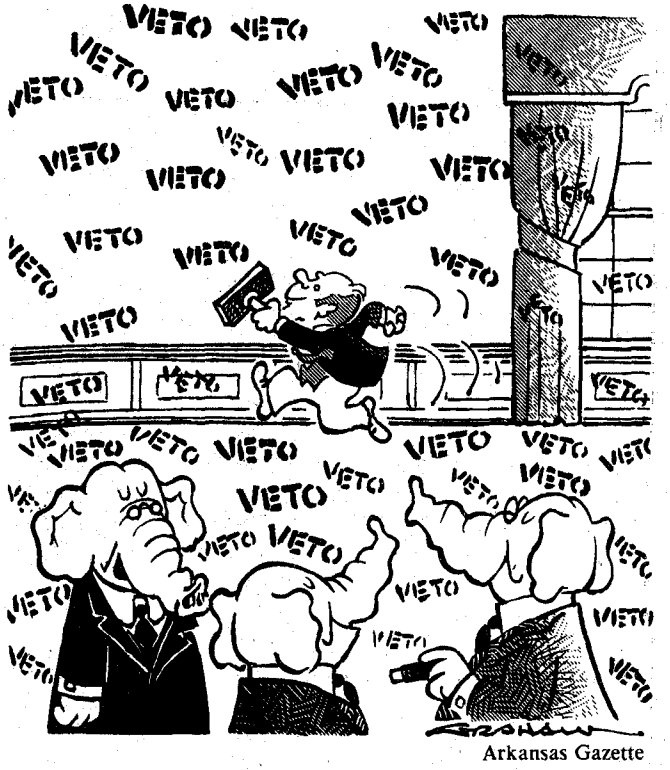
Since in those days the opposition party was led by giants like Henry Clay and Daniel Webster and Congressmen then were less inclined than they are now to bow supinely before Presidential claims to previously unheard-of powers, Jackson was formally censured by the Senate on March 28, 1834. The veto power, said Webster, was intended "only as an extraordinary remedy for extraordinary cases." Jackson's use of the pocket veto, charged Clay, "converted the qualified veto of the President into an absolute veto." Several years later, Congressmen from John Tyler's own Whig Party considered impeaching him for his enthusiastic "Jackson-style" vetoes, but settled for a more limited historical achievement: the first successful overriding of a Presidential veto.

Jackson and his partisans put forward a number of justifications for the new departure. The President, they argued, "more clearly represents a majority of the whole people" than does the Congress. By this argument, a man elected as Chief Executive by perhaps 51 per cent of the vote better represents the *legislative* desires of the people than do as many as 65 per cent of the Congress, many of whom may have received almost all the votes in their communities. The later repetition and popularity of this argument does not make it any less the patent nonsense that it seems to be. In a variation on this theme, a Democratic spokesman in 1842 tried to rationalize Jackson's unprecedented vetoes on the ground that "the framers of the Constitution imposed the restriction of the qualified veto of the President" because they too doubted that Congress invariably represented the popular will more truly than did the Chief Executive. This argument was hypocritical as well as inaccurate, for surely the man who offered it must have known that the fathers had inserted the veto to thwart rather than represent the "popular will."

Jacksonians also claimed that their hero had no choice but to veto the offensive legislation framed by his "aristocratic" opposition. Detracting from the force of this argument is a generation of scholarly research disclosing that Jackson's administrations were not only hostile to Indians, blacks and abolitionists, but that Jacksonians on the national and state levels were as sympathetic to large property and as indifferent to debtors and the plight of have-nots as were their opponents.

In my judgment and that of many other scholars of the pre-Civil War era, Jackson's uses of the veto are best explained neither on the grounds of a constitutional theory of any sort nor social necessity, but rather by his own personality and character.

This imperious man of towering ego fired his first Cabinet because the women in the families of most of its members had snubbed socially the notorious wife of one of his cronies. During his Presidential career he brushed aside Supreme Court rulings, federal treaties, constitution-



Arkansas Gazette

"He Sure Is Leaving an Imprint on the Workings of Government!"

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al precedents and even the laws of the land when any of these stood in the way of his wishes. It is not surprising that a man of Jackson's arrogance had no compunctions about transforming the limited veto envisaged by the founding fathers into the near-absolute "modern veto power." The great popularity of the hero of New Orleans and the artful demagoguery of Democratic spokesmen induced popular acquiescence in a constitutional revolution that drastically altered the sensitive balance among the three branches that was so carefully written into the Constitution.

The "imperial Presidency" with its swollen powers—what Professor Corwin described as "monarchy without its hereditary feature"—was well underway. The Jacksonian veto was the essential instrument that established undreamed of Executive power over domestic affairs, precisely as unilateral Presidential war making expanded it over international. In each case Congress ultimately accepted innovations that flouted both the Constitution and the promises of its authors. In *The Federalist*, Hamilton had assured Americans that the President's power to lead us *in* war, whether declared by Congress or resulting from invasion of our country, did not extend to the power to lead us *into* war.

Congress may have submitted to both usurpations for roughly similar reasons. In the face of an unpopular "Presidential war," the legislator could profess blamelessness—*he* hadn't declared it!—while casting votes for arms and money to "back up the boys" and thus convincing his ostensibly simple-minded constituents that their Congressman was a good, if pragmatic, patriot. Similarly, opportunistic legislators, fearful of offending a powerful domestic interest that was strongly opposed to some impending legislation, could nevertheless vote for it, projecting an image of Populistic fearlessness in the certainty that the measure would be vetoed and that votes were lacking to override.

A good example of the kind of Congressional irresponsibility induced by the modern Presidential veto was the hundreds of ridiculous private-assistance bills passed and vetoed during Grover Cleveland's Presidency. The political scientist Joseph E. Kallenbach has written that the modern veto power becomes a "creative force" when the President, by "drawing a line in advance by a statement of what he will not accept by way of legislation on a given subject . . . thus positively affect[s] legislative deliberations." Verily. By this logic, an absolute veto might be considered still more "creative." Prof. Herman Finer puts this matter less glowingly when he concludes that the modern veto power became "an unuttered threat to promoters of bills . . . and tended to become an instrument of bargaining for other legislation—an instrument to be propitiated by timely and obvious surrender."

The historical record of the veto power and its expansion confirms the prescience, the human fallibility and the wisdom of the founding fathers. In accord with the hopes of the most conservative of them, the veto power has indeed enabled the Executive "to control the legislature." The rare instances when Congress has overriden the veto demonstrate the shrewdness of their estimate that the two-thirds vote would normally not be forthcoming. Their fear that legislative "encroachments" would threaten the integrity of the Chief Executive, thereby necessitating the veto power for self-protection, proved unfounded. Yet who can criticize them for not having been able to predict the course of political developments? Nor could they have anticipated that, under the doctrine of judicial review, the federal judiciary would strike down flagrantly unconstitutional legislation. Finally, the virtual stalemate during times of crisis that has resulted from the expansive modern veto power testifies to their wisdom in favoring its more limited use.

With regard to the language finally written into the Constitution, I do not believe that Madison, Hamilton and the others were so Machiavellian and so dishonest as to have written Article I, Section 7 as they did in the hope that Presidents would veto at whim, despite their assurances to one another and to the people that Presidents would veto only in the two specified instances.

It seems clear then that the framers of the Constitution did not mean to create "government by veto" or the kind of stalemate that today threatens the economic health of the nation. The solution to the problem seems equally apparent: an amendment to the Constitution.

Three alternatives come to mind: discarding the veto altogether; spelling out precisely the types of legislation to be subject to veto, in the spirit of what I have called the Madisonian and Hamiltonian assurances; or reducing the amount of the majority needed to override from two-thirds to some smaller fraction. (I omit the pocket veto as a technical problem peripheral to the central issue.) The first alternative is too drastic, too much at odds with our history and likely to be too detrimental to an effective relationship between the legislative and executive branches to be worthy of serious consideration. The second seems impractical in view of the controversy over definitions sure to ensue. The third would by-pass scholastic discussion of categories and accomplish the needful reform sensibly and swiftly. The great question of course is: if not two-thirds, what should the new fraction be? The answer is too important to be decided by simply substituting a neat fraction such as Representative Bingham's three-fifths.

Sixty per cent would indeed be a significant reduction in the number of votes required to override a veto and would therefore be a distinct and democratic improvement over the present system. Yet, as statisticians can easily demonstrate, a three-fifths requirement would probably mean that many fewer than two-fifths of vetoed bills would be overridden, just as only one-tenth of one-third of vetoed bills have been overridden under the two-thirds requirement. Much thought would have to be given the working out of the optimum fraction or percentage of votes needed to override. Ideally, the new figure would retain for the President the modest influence on the legislative process

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intended for him by the framers of the Constitution and at the same time put an end to the present appalling situation in which the Chief Executive can block almost any legislation that, were he a legislator, he would oppose.

The present swollen veto power flouts the expressed intentions of the founders as well as good sense; above all, it frustrates the needs of the nation. A constitutional amendment modifying this power would restore among the branches of government the balance and the true separation that were sought by the founding fathers and go a long way toward cutting down the imperial Presidency to democratic size. □

LATIN AMERICAN WEAPONS MARKET

HOW TO TRIGGER AN ARMS RACE

MICHAEL T. KLARE

In January 1975, the first of forty-two Northrop F-5E Tiger-II supersonic jet fighters were delivered to Brazil, the total purchase being the largest transfer of advanced military aircraft to South America since World War II. In a major drive to modernize its armed forces, Brazil has also ordered at least five Lockheed C-130 cargo planes, several dozen UH-1H troop-carrying helicopters, hundreds of Raytheon AIM-9 Sidewinder air-to-air missiles, and millions of dollars worth of our electronic gear. The United States, which previously restricted its military exports to Latin America, has welcomed the Brazilian build-up and is energetically promoting sales of U.S. weapons elsewhere on the continent. And, while military spending in Latin America is generally lower than in other areas, the combination of U.S. pressure and Brazil's military push may well ignite a major arms race in the region.

Although State Department officials scoff at the danger of such an arms race, an analysis of regional military procurement patterns suggests that the danger is real. For decades the "Big Six" continental powers—Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Peru, Venezuela—have sought to maintain a rough balance of power and have tended therefore to match the arms acquisitions of their principal rivals. (Thus when Peru ordered a squadron of French Mirage jets in the mid-1960s, most of the other hemispheric powers ordered squadrons of their own.) Moreover, the American arms merchants expect a boom: according to *Aviation Week & Space Technology*, the leading industry journal, "Northrop's recent sales of its F-5 series . . . are the opening wedges in what should be a substantial U.S. penetration of the Latin American market."

Increased U.S. arms sales to Latin America have been a major White House goal since June 5, 1973, when President Nixon invoked an obscure provision of the Foreign Military Sales Act to permit F-5E sales to Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Peru. Such exports had been blocked by a Congressional ban on sales of "sophisticated weapons systems" to less developed countries, but by citing an imminent threat to U.S. national security interests Nixon overrode the restriction. State and Defense Department officials have testified that important political, military and economic interests are at stake and that the decision to sell jet fighters to these countries represented a "major policy decision."

Prior to Nixon's 1973 decision, U.S. arms policy on Latin America had been based on the premise that, in a period of revolutionary ferment, the top priority for the area was the promotion of rapid economic development, and that arms acquisitions should be confined to essential items. Major purchases of external defense hardware (such as tanks, supersonic aircraft and large warships) were considered militarily unnecessary and economically harmful, since they retarded development by consuming an excessive share of scarce national resources.

While the logic and goals of this policy have been hotly debated, there is general agreement that it did not curb major arms purchases by the larger and more prosperous hemispheric powers. When their access to the U.S. armaments industry was restricted, several South American governments turned to European suppliers for advanced equipment. (Between 1967 and 1972, Latin America spent $1.2 billion on European military hardware and only $335 million on U.S. equipment.)

Following the announcement of the Mirage deals, U.S. government and industry leaders formed a loose alliance to lobby for the repeal of all restrictions on high-technology military exports to Latin America. The Nixon administration, which was being forced by the debacle in Vietnam to reassess *all* U.S. foreign policy objectives, eagerly embraced the anti-restriction position. Indeed, the new policy meshed nicely with Nixon's goal of transferring local defense responsibilities to America's allies in the Third World.

The new green-light policy on arms exports to Latin America has already produced significant results: in mid-1973 Brazil completed its purchase of the forty-two F-5Es, and in June 1974, Chile announced plans to acquire eighteen F-5Es and sixteen Cessna A-37 Dragonfly counterinsurgency planes. Peru and Ecuador have recently made substantial purchases of A-37s, and several other nations have begun to dicker for the F-5E or other advanced U.S. aircraft. These orders have boosted U.S. arms exports to the region from an average of $30 million per year in 1966-70 to $113 million in 1973 and an estimated $191 million in 1974. Total U.S. Government sales during the past three years (fiscal 1972-74) stood at $414 million, four times the figure for the preceding three-year

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period and nearly twice the total for the entire fifteen-year period ending in 1965.

These data raise several important questions about U.S.-Latin American relations and about the effect of such sales on political, economic and military developments within the hemisphere. At the same time, they lead one to consider the grounds on which U.S. arms policies are based, and the role Congress and the public can play in shaping them.

Before proceeding to these questions, however, it is necessary to review the history of U.S. arms policy in the region and particularly the various factors which precipitated the policy reversal of June 5, 1973.

Up to World War II, Latin America obtained the bulk of its armaments from Europe, and most continental armies were trained and advised by French, British or German officers. These ties led the major South American powers to calculate their weapons needs on the basis of European military doctrine, which stressed defense against attack by rival powers. "This originally meant," the State Department noted in 1973, "that qualitatively their standards of weapons acquisitions were comparable to those of major powers, although quantitatively much more limited."

When the World War broke out, Europe could not spare arms for marginal allies, and only the United States had sufficient industrial capacity to produce weapons for export. Under the Lend-Lease Act of 1941, Latin American armies were supplied with U.S. arms and equipment in return for access to certain bases and strategic raw materials.

After 1945, the United States continued to dominate the arms market in Latin America. Europe was fully occupied with domestic economic recovery, while the United States had large stocks of surplus military equipment which it was willing to sell at a considerable discount. Moreover, wartime cooperation had left a legacy of partnership that was further strengthened by the Rio Treaty of 1947 and later by the bilateral mutual defense pacts signed with most countries in the early 1950s. According to a 1973 Rand study prepared by Luigi Einaudi (now Henry Kissinger's chief adviser on Latin American affairs), "These pacts typically granted the United States a monopoly on military advisory missions, and thus symbolized *de facto* U.S. predominance." And, while some countries continued to acquire their new high-performance arms from Western Europe, "the United States came to be seen as the predominant supplier of arms and training to Latin America, with World War II and Korean War stocks of materiel a source of inexpensive but reliable arms and equipment."

During most of the cold-war period, the main purpose of U.S. arms programs in Latin America was to strengthen the hemisphere's defenses against external (presumably Soviet) attack. After the Cuban Revolution, however, the objective was reversed: as Prof. Edwin Lieuwen of the University of New Mexico has noted, "The basis of military aid to Latin America abruptly shifted from hemispheric defense to internal security, from the protection of coastlines and from anti-submarine warfare to defense against Castro-Communist guerrilla warfare." In a discussion of the revised arms program Robert S. McNamara, then Defense Secretary, told Congress in 1967 that "our primary objective in Latin America is to aid, where necessary, in the continued development of indigenous military and paramilitary forces capable of providing, in conjunction with the police and other security forces, the needed domestic security."

In the new counterinsurgency strategies devised by Kennedy's military advisers, underdevelopment and stagnation were seen as the principal causes of revolution, and thus economic modernization was considered essential. Latin American armies were expected to assist in this development by lending their managerial and technical skills to civilian projects, by participating in military civic action programs, and by refraining from excessive purchases of military hardware (other than those required for counter-guerrilla operations). The official U.S. view of that time was summarized by Raymond J. Barrett, a Foreign Service officer attached to U.S. Air Force Headquarters:

> The need for expensive arms by Latin American countries does not appear great. They are protected against conventional military threats by the effective Inter-American peacekeeping machinery, by the Rio Treaty security guarantees, and by wide oceans. . . .
>
> The principal threat to Latin American nations is internal. It is the danger of Fidel Castro-sponsored subversion. The fundamental response to this threat is quicker and better economic development, but strengthening internal security is also important.

To the dismay of U.S. policy makers, most Latin American military leaders did not fully accept Washington's strategic outlook. While the Pentagon was generally successful in mobilizing indigenous armies for U.S.-sponsored counter-guerrilla operations in the countryside (such as the 1967 campaign against Che Guevara in Bolivia), Washington never succeeded in erasing the traditional view that defense against external attack is the primary mission of Latin American military forces. In line with this outlook, Peru in 1965 decided to replace its aging F-86 interceptors, preferably with the supersonic F-5A Freedom Fighter. U.S. policy makers saw the Peruvian request "as a prime example of wasteful military expenditures for unnecessarily sophisticated equipment at a time when generous U.S. credits were being extended for economic development," and rejected the deal.

When rebuffed by Washington, the Peruvians turned to France and the Dassault-Breguet Mirage V fighter. Other Latin American countries acquired Mirage jets of their own. U.S. resistance to these purchases—at one time Washington threatened to turn off economic aid to Peru—led some countries to adopt a policy of diversifying their arms purchases among several countries, while others began to build up their own arms industries, thus further eroding U.S. dominance in the arms trade.

The response to these events in the United States was manifold. The aerospace industry began an intensive lobbying campaign to reverse U.S. policy on sales of high-technology armaments. And some government officials, concluding that Latin America's "turn toward Europe" would undermine U.S. ties with the region's military leaders, joined forces with industry lobbyists. The opening

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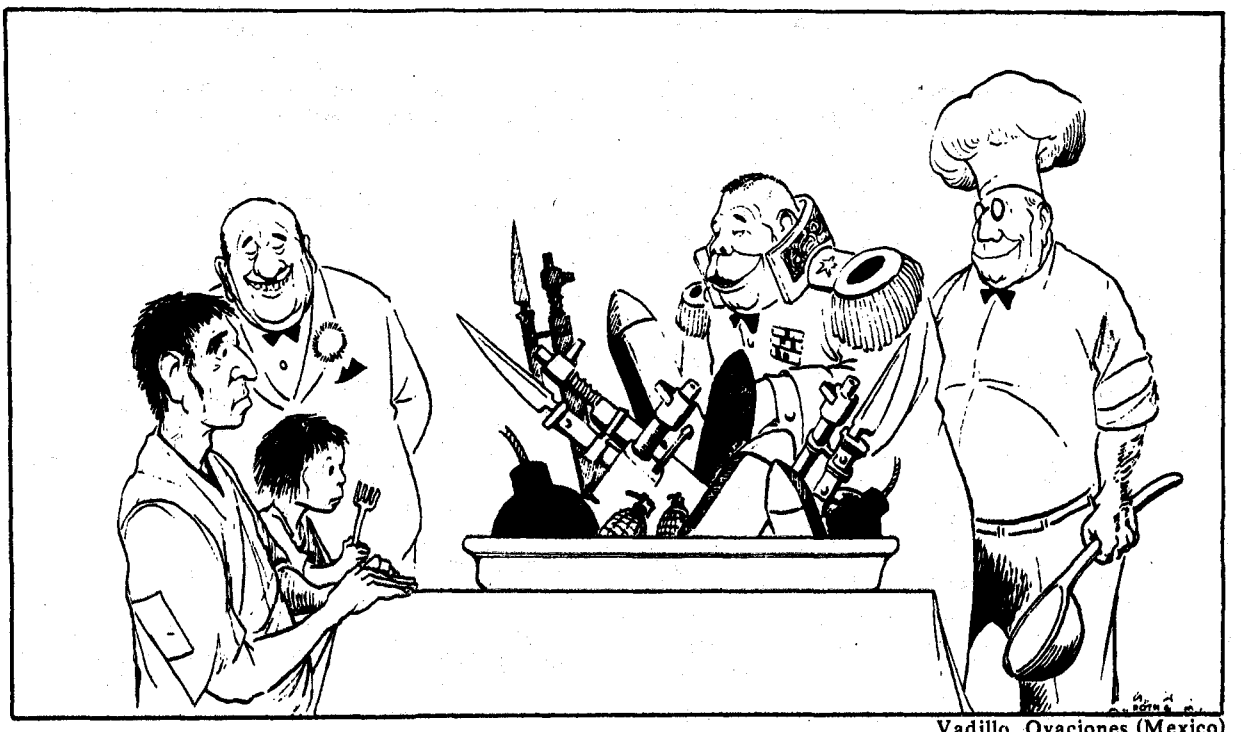

Latin American Diet — Vadillo, Ovaciones (Mexico)

salvo in this campaign was fired by Nelson Rockefeller (then Governor of New York) who told Nixon upon his return from Latin America in 1969:

> The United States must face more forthrightly the fact that, while the military in the other American nations are alert to the problems of internal security, they do not feel that this is their only role and responsibility. They are conscious of the more traditional role of the military establishment to defend the nation's territory, and they possess understandable professional pride which creates equally understandable desires for modern arms. . . .

Rockefeller's recommendation that Washington permit sales of "aircraft, ships and other major military equipment without aid-cut penalties to the more developed nations of the hemisphere" helped legitimize the export campaign.

Although the White House proved receptive to Rockefeller's argument, the Congress was not so accommodating. Angered by the Mirage purchases (which seemed to nullify the intent of U.S. economic aid programs), and in response to growing opposition to U.S. military policy (then exemplified by an unpopular war in Asia), Congress adopted several new restrictions on arms exports to Latin America. Section 4 of the Foreign Military Sales Act of 1968, as amended, prohibits sales of "sophisticated weapons systems" to underdeveloped countries (except to the "forward defense countries" on the borders of China and the USSR) and Section 620 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1971 (Symington-Conte amendment) requires that the Executive reduce aid to any country which diverts excessive funds to purchase of sophisticated military hardware. Other amendments to these and related statutes placed further restrictions on arms sales to Latin America.

To overcome these obstacles to a more flexible export program, government and industry spokesmen have conducted a vociferous campaign for repeal of all statutory restraints. In their attempt to influence Congress, export lobbyists have fabricated a bogus analysis of Latin America's turn toward Europe which tends to dominate public discussion of the issue.

Most criticism of arms restrictions hinges on two main points: (*1*) the United States "lost" a normally secure arms market to Europe because of misguided export policies; (*2*) U.S. restrictions on the export of high-technology hardware were the product of a paternalistic, humanitarian attempt on the part of Congress to speed economic development in Latin America. While both of these statements contain some elements of truth, they also hide or distort other, more important truths:

(*1*) *The "lost" arms market:* U.S. arms sales to Latin America during 1968-72 totaled only $335 million; European sales exceeded $1.2 billion. Industry sources insist that these "third country" sales would have gone to the United States had it not been for the restrictions. According to Cecil Brownlow, executive editor of *Aviation Week*, Congress' "high-handed paternalistic approach to Latin America . . . provided a driving wedge for France and Great Britain into wider areas of the aerospace market there and generated at least a temporary turn away from American military hardware." But a review of Latin American arms acquisition patterns since 1945 suggests that the conventional analysis is deficient: while Washington provided most of the arms acquired by Latin America in the postwar era, it did not provide (except for a few warships) any of the new high-performance weapons purchased during this period. A Rand survey of postwar arms transfers shows that Latin American countries almost invariably bought their new-construction hardware in Europe. Thus Great Britain supplied most first-generation jet fighters and almost all new-construction warships acquired by Latin America after World War II. Recent Latin American purchases of British guided-missile

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destroyers and aircraft can be seen then as a continuation of past policy and not just a response to U.S. policy.

This finding is further confirmed by the fact that in the fields where the United States has traditionally been the principal supplier—e.g., transport aircraft, trainers and helicopters—there has been no pronounced loss of market.

(2) *Congressional "humanitarianism":* According to Brownlow, Latin America's turn toward Europe occurred when "a 'father-knows-best' Congress refused to sell advanced military aircraft" in the belief that Latin America "should spend its money for more worthwhile projects such as raising the standard of living of its lower classes." While it is undoubtedly true that many in Congress held such beliefs, this analysis distorts reality in two important respects: first, the restrictive policy did not originate in the Congress but in the executive branch; and second, it was not primarily motivated by a desire to eradicate poverty but rather to advance U.S. counterinsurgency programs. Thus Washington's opposition to F-5A sales to Peru did not arise from a humanitarian impulse but from a consistent counterrevolutionary outlook; indeed, the concomitant U.S. policy of supplying large quantities of counterinsurgency weapons to Latin America has probably led to far more violence and suffering than can be attributed to purchases of the Mirage or other high-performance systems from Europe.

The charge of "paternalism" is further refuted by another consideration: Washington's desire to delay Latin American weapons purchases while U.S. arms firms were busy with Vietnam war production. In 1965, when the original ban on high-performance aircraft was imposed, U.S. aerospace companies were fully occupied; by stressing the need for restraint, U.S. policy makers evidently hoped that Latin America could be persuaded to defer major acquisitions for a few years—or until U.S. producers had slack capacity. Thus the Johnson administration's 1967 recommendation to Latin American governments that "aircraft on hand be maintained as long as possible and that newer models not be introduced into the area until the 1967-70 time frame"—when the F-5A would be available for sale to the region—can be interpreted as an attempt to preclude third-country purchases until the U.S. aerospace industry was equipped to handle non-Vietnam orders.

The conventional analysis of U.S. export policies is clearly deficient in many respects, but it raises several key issues of U.S.-Latin American power relationships. If, as we have seen, the Johnson administration's original 1965 decision to limit high-technology military sales to Latin America was based on strategic considerations, what new factors compelled Nixon to reverse course a few years later? By now it should be obvious that arms policies cannot be considered in isolation from the political and economic fundamentals of foreign policy, and that leads to a discussion of America's post-Vietnam strategy.

Although it is still too early to calculate all the effects of America's failure in Southeast Asia, it has long been clear that the United States would emerge from the war with a substantial reduction in global power and prestige. More than 500,000 U.S. troops were committed to Vietnam, along with the full technological resources of the world's most advanced industrial power. And, although the U.S. war machine never seriously threatened the survival of the revolutionary army, three Presidents staked the credibility of U.S. power on a futile and costly intervention. Thus the failure of the U.S. counterinsurgency mission diminished the world's assessment of U.S. military prowess. Economically, moreover, the war exacerbated U.S. balance-of-payments problems and helped diminish the value of the dollar in foreign markets.

These developments, which greatly reduced Washington's leverage in the world political arena, have encouraged other nations to adopt a more independent stance in international affairs. Examples of this trend include the Arab oil embargo and the OPEC price rises, Europe's refusal to support the emergency U.S. airlift to Israel during the October war, and Thailand's recent call for the withdrawal of U.S. troops. In Latin America, too, there are similar signs: Venezuela's nationalization of U.S. oil and steel companies, Peru's "nationalist revolution," the repeal of OAS sanctions against Cuba, and Panama's campaign to recover sovereignty over the Panama Canal Zone. Simultaneously, the Administration's foreign policy maneuverability has been reduced by an assortment of Congressional restrictions on U.S. military and economic aid programs.

To improve U.S. leverage abroad while conserving U.S. resources at home, the Nixon-Ford tactic has been to replace obsolete cold-war policies with more realistic, "cost-effective" ones. The rapprochement with China, the SALT agreements, Kissinger's "shuttle diplomacy" in the Middle East and the "new dialogue" with Latin America—all represent attempts to increase U.S. leverage without sacrificing paramount objectives. These moves are designed to bolster America's position as the world's leading superpower while permitting a greater role for secondary powers.

In its search for new options, the Administration has seized upon arms sales as a flexible tool for acquiring added prestige abroad while conserving resources at home. Unlike military assistance, the sales program is not financed by the U.S. taxpayer and thus does not provoke the grass-roots opposition faced by most grant programs. At the same time, such exports help beef up the armed forces of pro-U.S. governments abroad while providing U.S. personnel with increased access to the military leaders of these countries. These and other factors which stimulate U.S. arms sales to Latin America are summarized below:

(1) *Economic Factors*: In October 1971 America's foreign trade balance showed a net deficit for the first time since 1893, and foreign military sales are increasingly seen as an important source of export revenues. The Pentagon has been ordered to step up its marketing activities abroad and, since the arms market in the developed countries is already saturated, the salesmen have increasingly concentrated on Third World countries. (According to the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, arms transfers among the developed countries held relatively steady at a rate of about $1.6 billion annually during 1961-71, while arms imports by underdeveloped countries rose from $1.2 billion in 1961 to $4.5 billion in 1971.)

Military sales are also considered essential to a continuing high rate of productivity and employment in the aerospace industry. When Pentagon spending on war operations in Vietnam began to decline in the early 1970s, many U.S. aerospace firms faced significant cutbacks. In order

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to keep their production lines alive, Washington turned to the Third World as the only possible outlet for such equipment, and now many weapons originally designed for the conflict in Vietnam are being exported to Latin America. Already, Rockwell International has sold sixteen of its once-doomed OV-10 Bronco counterinsurgency aircraft to Venezuela, and Cessna is busy filling orders for its A-37 Dragonfly close-support planes (Peru has bought twenty-four, Chile sixteen, and Ecuador twelve). Latin American sales have also figured prominently in the continued prosperity of Northrop, producer of the F-5E; it is not surprising, therefore, that Northrop paid $2.3 million to close associates of a high-ranking Brazilian Air Force officer to help expedite the F-5E sale. (The Brazilian transaction came to light in a recent Senate investigation of Northrop's payments to agents and other middlemen involved in arms deals abroad.)

(2) *Politico-Military Factors*: Since most modern armaments require spare parts, training aids and maintenance services that can be obtained only from the producer, arms sales are a source of considerable political influence. The more sophisticated the weapon, moreover, the more dependent the buyer becomes on technical services furnished by the supplier. And, since such services are required throughout the lifetime of the product (fifteen to twenty years for most aircraft), an arms agreement normally "tends to tie the recipient politically to the donor for this period of time if any continuity [in military effectiveness] is to be maintained." William Perreault, vice president of Lockheed (which has sold dozens of its C-130 Hercules transports in Latin America) told me: "When you buy an airplane, you also buy a supplier and a supply line—in other words, *you buy a political partner.*"

Arms sales enhance the political presence of a supplier in another important respect by providing access to foreign military leaders, who in most Latin American countries play a decisive role in national politics. The contacts begin with the sales negotiations themselves (which are normally conducted by a country's top military officers) and follow with training programs, maintenance contracts, technical assistance, etc. If handled diplomatically, such associations can lead to a close working relationship with host country military personnel and result in significant political advantages as well as further military sales. According to Secretary of Defense Schlesinger, "The degree of influence of the supplier is potentially substantial, and typically, those relationships are long enduring." This linkage between military sales and U.S. national security objectives is clearly brought out in the case of Chile: although Washington limited economic aid to $3 million during Allende's Presidency and blocked all forms of credit in a carefully orchestrated campaign to undermine the Popular Unity government, the Pentagon gave Chile more than $25 million in arms credits and held frequent sales meetings with Chilean officers—thus providing U.S. officials with "legitimate" access to these officers while they were conspiring to overthrow Allende.

Military exports are also used by Washington to strengthen certain countries within each region in order to establish an *overall* balance of power favorable to U.S. interests. With the collapse of the U.S. counterinsurgency mission in Vietnam and the corresponding rise of anti-interventionist sentiments at home, Washington has been obliged to shift the burden of local policing to client regimes and selected local powers in the Third World. This redistribution of military roles forms the core of the Nixon doctrine and has resulted in a rapid acceleration of arms deliveries to favored powers. At the same time, Washington has delayed or prohibited sales to certain countries when it was felt that such transfers would shift the military balance in an unfavorable direction. Thus Washington has expedited F-5E sales to Chile and Brazil (both of whose governments follow U.S. guidelines on most strategic issues), but has refused to respond to a similar purchase offer from Peru (whose military rulers have instituted a brand of radical nationalism considered inimical to U.S. interests).

It is clear from the above that arms sales policies are shaped by the interaction of multiple economic, political and military factors. When these factors are in opposition, as they were in the mid-1960s, military sales will be restricted; when they are in conjunction, as they are today, such sales will be accelerated. It follows that U.S. arms sales to Latin America will continue to expand until a new alignment of politico-economic objectives precipitates a change of policy.

"Our goal," a top Latin American affairs officer at the State Department told me recently, "is to be the principal arms supplier to the region." In its drive to increase U.S. weapons exports, the Administration will naturally concentrate its marketing efforts in the larger and more prosperous countries (especially those with new oil revenues), but it will not neglect the smaller and poorer countries. Recently, in fact, the Pentagon has arranged sales of military aircraft to several Central American and Caribbean countries which had previously received all their equipment gratis under the Military Assistance Program. Even Haiti, the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, has stepped up its purchases of U.S. arms. Washington has also proved accommodating to some of the more nationalistic countries; thus when Brazil tightened its controls on imports of aerospace products (to stimulate domestic manufacturing), major U.S. defense contractors, including Northrop, were encouraged to subcontract some of their work to Brazilian firms.

Its domestic production schemes notwithstanding, Brazil is now and will continue to be Washington's major arms customer in Latin America. In line with the shift in Brazilian military doctrine from an emphasis on counterinsurgency to preparation for conventional interstate war, "a long-term program is underway to strengthen all branches of the armed forces." Brazil spent about $200 million on U.S. military hardware over the past few years, and new orders (including the $120-million F-5E deal) will boost this figure considerably. In addition to the aircraft, Brazil has made substantial purchases of surplus U.S. warships and modern naval armaments. And, if the military junta goes through with its plans to form a 7,000-man parachute brigade, Brazil will need an additional forty-eight C-130s at a cost of more than $5 million each. (According to the London-based *Latin America* newsletter, "the idea is that this force will be able to operate anywhere in Latin America within twelve hours.")

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Brazil has made no secret of the fact that it seeks a dominant position within Latin America, and thus the current military build-up there is certain to generate considerable anxiety in neighboring countries—particularly Argentina, Peru and Venezuela. Argentina, the number-two power in South America, has always felt threatened by the giant to the north and has sought to match Brazilian military capabilities on an item-by-item basis. In Peru, the ruling military council has watched with growing alarm the steady influx of Brazilian weapons into neighboring Bolivia and Chile. And Venezuela, which has recently assumed a leading role in hemispheric affairs, fears a Brazilian invasion of Surinam and French Guiana following the withdrawal of the Dutch and the French.

If traditional patterns hold, these countries will now build up their own defenses. And, while the State Department insists that U.S. arms policies will not provoke an arms race, it is clear that top Administration officials are aware that the F-5E deal is likely to stimulate a new round of arms buying in the hemisphere. Indeed, the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research recently reported that "institutional pressures to acquire arms always rise . . . when peer military establishments are buying conspicuous equipment—particularly new principal combatant vessels, *high-performance combat aircraft* and modern tanks" (emphasis added). Thus the F-5E deal can be seen as a calculated act to stimulate arms purchases. For surely Brazil's aspiration to become a hegemonic power, coupled with attempts by its neighbors to achieve rough military parity, could precipitate an upward spiral of weapons spending that would prove highly lucrative for U.S. arms producers.

The danger of a major arms race in Latin America calls for a policy of restraint on the part of the major suppliers, particularly the United States. However, despite its occasional calls for the adoption of regional arms-control measures, the Administration does not appear disposed to such limitations. Indeed, Washington's goal of becoming "the principal arms supplier in the region" is obviously incompatible with any strategy for the development of controls.

With the executive branch unwilling to exercise restraint, it is up to Congress to assert leadership. Congress has not paid much attention to this issue in the past and last year voted to eliminate the ceiling on arms credits to Latin America. However, recent publicity concerning the growing weapons trade may have stiffened Congressional resistance to the Administration's policy. Sen. Gaylord Nelson (D., Wis.) has just introduced a bill to impose Congressional control over all major arms agreements (i.e., sales totaling $25 million or more), and chances for its passage seem good. The Nelson bill would not immediately affect the arms trade with Latin America (which rarely involves single sales of greater than $25 million), but it will establish the machinery for Congressional oversight of all foreign sales. □

DIGGING UP THE ROSE GARDEN

McCarthy Challenges the System

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Eugene McCarthy has one thing in common with Jimmy Carter, Fred Harris, Morris Udall, Terry Sanford, Henry Jackson, Lloyd Bentsen, Milton Shapp and Sargent Shriver —each has decided he is the best possible choice for the Presidency in 1976.

Unlike all but possibly one of the others, however, McCarthy, who has burned his bridges to the Democratic Party, cannot settle for its Vice Presidential nomination. More important, unlike all but possibly one of the others, he is certain to be listed on the ballot as a Presidential candidate in at least some states in November 1976. This fact and the nature of McCarthy's campaign—an independent challenge to the political party system—make it dangerous to dismiss him as a factor, next year and beyond.

McCarthy's major problem is having his candidacy taken seriously. Many people wonder whether he is even in the race to the finish, whether his campaign may be a mixture of pique, arrogance and political science lectures. McCarthy's field coordinator, Ron Cocome, describes McCarthy as "deadly serious" in his campaign, and McCarthy's recent acts seem to bear this out; he has quit two teaching jobs to campaign full time, living on his Senate pension and some of his lecture fees.

McCarthy himself says he's in the race to the finish. In 1968 and 1972, he says, he had made a commitment to stay within the Democratic Party after the convention; he has no such commitment today. If George McGovern sees himself as someone rejected by the people because they didn't understand him, McCarthy sees himself as someone prevented by his party from being ratified by the people. He claims he could have beaten Nixon as a peace candidate in 1968 and run a more effective campaign than McGovern in 1972, and he may well be right on both counts. If he fails to finish the race, it will be because the bottom falls out of his campaign, not because of a whim.

McCarthy is running against the President, the Congress and the parties in both the abstract and the particular. He is critical of the power that has come to rest in the Presidency, a theme he hit in 1968. He criticizes the Democrats for saying, "You've got to depersonalize the Presidency, and we've got to get a candidate who can put it all together." But McCarthy hasn't resolved this conflict

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Judith Barry Smith

Eugene McCarthy

within his own campaign. He obviously wants to change the office through the force of his personality—some of his campaign posters, left over from 1972, proclaim him "the only man who can make a difference."

McCarthy's campaign might more accurately be described as an effort to "demystify" the Presidency. For example, a comment on what he would do if elected:

> One of my first acts would be to take out the White House Rose Garden. I'd replace it with humble vegetables like cabbage and squash.
>
> Presidents have used the Rose Garden as a place to disguise irresponsible policies. You'd have trouble announcing war in a cabbage patch.

In his criticisms of the parties, McCarthy goes back to the founding fathers. The Constitution, he notes, intentionally makes no mention of political parties, and George Washington's farewell address contains an even stronger warning against the dangers of political parties than against the dangers of entangling alliances.

The parties have helped corrupt the Presidency, McCarthy believes, because of the Chief Executive's other role as party head. For example, he says, a Democratic Congress during a Republican administration may thwart the President, not for the good of the people but for political gains in the next election. McCarthy likewise criticizes the Democrats for playing "my party right or wrong" by supporting Lyndon Johnson's war in Vietnam.

McCarthy uses the Democrats' courting of George Wallace as an example of the corrupting influence of personality politics on party politics:

> If you get him [Wallace], you get identified with his position on all of the issues. He's not wrong on everything, but if you take him in, you get the whole package.
>
> Half of the Wallace people aren't supporting George's extreme views; they're there because they feel they're not represented. Wallace is saying, "I'm not going to do anything for you, but I'm not going to let them do anything to you."
>
> Rather than just say, "Let's take George in," the Democrats should have given some thought to the rather proper concerns of these people.

Instead of concentrating on personalities, McCarthy says the Democrats should be "talking about the office [of the Presidency] and putting the party together so it stands for something, like it did back in 1948. It's sort of privateering now. Everybody carries his own flag—Jackson stands for this, Wallace stands for this, Udall stands for this."

McCarthy spends much of his campaign blaming both parties for the nation's ills, from the state of the economy to the state of the CIA. Polls indicate a growing support for this approach. A Philips-Sindlinger survey last fall showed that 55 per cent of the people wanted an alternative to the two major party candidates in 1976. Pollster Louis Harris says 38 per cent of the American people consider themselves independent, and straw polls have shown even higher percentages in some areas. James Longley, elected Governor of Maine as an independent last fall, and Harris have predicted that an independent could be elected President next time.

McCarthy claims, for example, that an independent President would be more effective than a President who was also a party head. An independent would be free of patronage chores, could appoint the best people, regardless of party, and could deal with Congress free of party factions; it's more important for a President to have a good relationship with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the House Ways and Means Committee than to worry about his party, McCarthy says. Asked if it wasn't likely that both parties would unite in trying to undo an anti-party President, McCarthy says such an effort would be obvious and would invite sanctions from the people.

McCarthy's platform is essentially that of liberal Democrats, but an aide notes that his style has more in common with those with whom he is in the strongest disagreement on issues. In other words, McCarthy believes it possible to reach those liberal goals through more Republican approaches, by simply redirecting "the existing devices."

The major example of this approach is McCarthy's proposed solution to the unemployment situation. By using devices such as tax incentives, excise taxes, accelerated depreciation, investment credits, some direct subsidies, and so on, he would encourage industry to redistribute the nation's existing 50 million jobs to create enough openings for the 8.5 million people now unemployed. This could be done, he says, by cutting the work week from forty to thirty-five hours (the first such change in thirty years) or by adding an extra two weeks' vacation. All of this could be done, McCarthy believes, at a cost no greater than that of current unemployment benefits, public service jobs and the

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like. The jobs created, he says, would also be oriented toward meeting human and societal needs.

He also calls for a "new bill of rights" that would guarantee everyone adequate housing, health care and education. He would support a guaranteed income program for those unable to work (in 1972, he suggested $6,000 a year for a family of four). The program would be financed by funds used in current welfare and food-stamp programs, plus money saved and redirected from waste in the defense and automobile industries, both of which he believes are inflationary. McCarthy is conspicuous for his attack on the auto industry in a time when both parties are treating it with kid gloves. "It has been estimated," he says, "that—without any reduction in the movement of people by automobiles—between $30 billion and $35 billion could be saved if reasonable changes were made."

In foreign affairs, he would pursue détente, although he says, "if we accomplish under the name détente those very limited objectives now being considered, the current meaning of the word will have to be reduced so as to encompass little more than doing the obvious by way of minimal exchange and common effort." McCarthy would also push American disarmament initiatives.

Discussing foreign affairs, McCarthy uses the war in Vietnam as an example of why he would have been a better candidate than McGovern. McGovern's approach to ending the war—a troop pull-out—would have been no more effective than Vietnamization, according to McCarthy, while his own approach—a negotiated settlement—could have been brought off in 1969 or 1970.

How is McCarthy's campaign progressing? "Well," he says, "I suppose I could have expected to have everyone surrender by now, but it's going about as well as we expected." McCarthy's field coordinator Cocome later notes that organizing is going more slowly than expected in high-priority areas, but doing better than expected in surprising places like Oklahoma. Cocome notes that McCarthy's field manager in the state of Washington defeated Henry Jackson's candidate for chairmanship of the state's Young Democrats. The other announced candidates haven't had much to say about McCarthy's campaign (they've been "respectful," he says), but one early dropout, Minnesota Sen. Walter Mondale, has reportedly said that McCarthy will give the Democrats "fits" in 1976. One McCarthy aide says nothing exciting will really happen until September of 1976, after the parties have nominated their candidates. McCarthy hopes to advance his own campaign by debating the other candidates.

He is working with a small national staff. The Committee for a Constitutional Presidency, his campaign committee, will soon develop a national advisory board, with representation weighted toward states with the most electoral votes. Instead of traveling with a national staff and hearing the same thing every place he goes, according to Cocome, McCarthy will rely on local people to keep him in closer touch with what people are thinking.

He and the committee won't name a Vice Presidential candidate until they have to qualify for state ballots. McCarthy believes the Vice President should be chosen by the electoral college; his only duties, McCarthy says, are agreeing with the President's policies and staying healthy. It's more important, McCarthy says, for a candidate to tell people whom he intends to name to Cabinet posts.

The first real test of the McCarthy campaign will come on March 9, 1976, the filing deadline for petitions to get on the ballot in Maryland. With a requirement of signatures from 3 per cent of the registered voters, about 61,000 names, Maryland is the first state with a fairly difficult requirement. (The first deadline is in Ohio, which asks for only 15,000 signatures.) The most telling scorecard of McCarthy's campaign will be whether or not he gathers the minimum signatures needed to get on the ballot in each state and, if so, the amount by which he exceeds it.

The number of signatures needed ranges from twenty-five in Tennessee to half a million in California. McCarthy estimates that 1.5 million to 2 million signatures are needed to get on the ballot in every state. A major effort of the campaign will be challenging six or seven state laws which McCarthy believes discriminate against independent candidates by making requirements for getting on the ballot too hard. Delaware and New Mexico prohibit independent candidacies; North Carolina requires signatures totaling 10 per cent of the last vote for governor; Arkansas requires 15 per cent of the registered voters, with the stipulation that registered Republicans and Democrats cannot sign. McCarthy will challenge the state laws with the assistance of the American Civil Liberties Union and private lawyers who will donate their services.

He is also involved in another major lawsuit, a challenge of the new federal campaign financing law. He is joined in that case by a strange coalition of liberals and conservatives—New York Sen. James Buckley, *Human Events*, the ACLU and Stewart Mott, a well-bankrolled backer of liberal candidates in the past. Their basic complaint is that the law institutionalizes the Democratic and Republican Parties, discriminates against third-party candidates and independents and violates freedom of speech and expression. The $100 level for requiring disclosure is too low because it will prevent many people from giving more than that amount because they don't want the publicity; $1,000 should be the level for requiring disclosure, McCarthy's staff believes. The current $1,000 limit on individual contributions is also too low, McCarthy believes; up to $25,000 should be allowed, so that independents could gather "seed money." A successful challenge to the law could aid McCarthy both by allowing higher contributions and providing matching federal funds.

McCarthy's own "seed money" has come in the form of $30,000 in gifts from William Clay Ford, president of the Detroit Lions and a major stockholder in Ford Motors. The Ford money, along with $2,500 from Paul Newman and Joanne Woodward and several other contributions for a total of a little more than $40,000 were made before the new campaign financing law became effective. The contributions are, however, listed with the Federal Election Commission.

The commission shows that through June 30, McCarthy's campaign had raised another $34,000 and had $19,000 on hand with no debts. But about $15,000 of the $34,000 was in the form of honoraria paid to the committee for providing McCarthy's services for speeches. That practice may have to be changed following possible future commission rulings on advisory opinions. For example, a

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strict reading of the law might treat the honoraria as corporate contributions, a violation of the law. Also, the fees may have to count against the $50,000 limit on personal contributions by a candidate. McCarthy, however, isn't alone in this situation; several other candidates have queried the commission about similar practices in their own campaigns.

Beyond finances and organization, McCarthy's strategy, like any other candidate's, is to concentrate on the states with the most electoral votes. According to Cocome, McCarthy believes that, for example, by running a good second to the Democratic candidate in Chicago and a good second to the Republican candidate in rural Illinois, he could gain a plurality in the state.

If he runs a good campaign, it would seem that he would hurt a Democratic candidate if the election is decided in the electoral college and help him if it is decided in the heavily Democratic House. Asked his reaction to charges that his candidacy could defeat a Democratic candidate and put Ford back in the White House, McCarthy grows "deadly serious"—"that's the Democrats' problem. They lost twice to Richard Nixon without my help. That's their problem."

It's difficult to evaluate the McCarthy campaign this early, partly because a Wallace third-party candidacy would affect the election; McCarthy believes that his chances improve with the number of candidates running. In a race with two other candidates, the only scenario for a McCarthy victory would probably look like this: growing dissatisfaction with the Ford Administration; a Ford ticket with a pronounced conservative cast, such as Reagan as Vice President, or, possibly, a Reagan upset at the convention; a chaotic Democratic convention that nominates either Wallace or a conservative candidate with full Wallace support; liberal and moderate Democrats' turn to McCarthy, rather than run yet another candidate of their own. (McCarthy, whose early support numbers some Wallace people and moderate Republicans, says "the liberal Democrats will be the last to come over.")

A close look at McCarthy's campaign leaves a feeling of ambivalence. The criticisms of the parties ring true; the polls are supportive; the notion of achieving progressive changes without new programs appeals to many people. But the gut reaction right now is that, while an independent could very well be elected President in the near future, it doesn't have to be McCarthy.

The main element lacking in McCarthy's 1976 campaign is what made his 1968 campaign formidable—passion. The lack of passion is due not only to the loss of the war as an issue; there seems to be a general lack of passion in the country today. Fears of a "long hot summer" in the ghetto and unemployment riots have not been realized; apathy and ennui are growing, and Ford's ratings in the polls seem to be climbing with the unemployment rate; cynics note that 90 per cent of the people are still working and aren't concerned about the rest.

And if a surge of passion were to sweep the country, there's no guarantee McCarthy would be the beneficiary; when people talk about "independent" candidates, they talk about Ralph Nader and John Gardner. McCarthy is still linked to the "politicians" by his own decision to run for President, a victim in part of this year's newest political axioms: the Mondale rule that anyone who wants the office is temperamentally unsuited for it and the Udall law that once you put your name on the list of announced candidates, the people take your name off the list of those they want to see run.

But this doesn't mean that McCarthy's campaign can be safely ignored. In 1968 he did the unthinkable by challenging an incumbent President of his own party; in 1972, Nixon had challenges from within his party on both the Left and Right, and a Reagan challenge to Ford is already underway. Such challenges are no longer unthinkable. A credible McCarthy campaign could give an independent race the respectability that Wallace third-party efforts have not had. McCarthy's campaign, particularly if he is successful in overturning state laws which hamper independents, could have a real effect in the future—possibly by making it possible to elect a Nader or Gardner in 1980. □

TWO CASE HISTORIES

INFLATION BY OLIGOPOLY

BENNETT HARRISON

It is a tenet of radical political economy that the most important systematic explanation for the severity of modern capitalist inflation is the increasing power and influence (if not numerical incidence) of oligopoly throughout the capitalist world. It is these concentrated employers who have the most market (i.e., price-making) power, who can most easily influence their government regulators (e.g., through promises of jobs at six-digit salaries), whose employment discrimination has the greatest consequences (because so many "good" jobs are involved), who can afford to withhold output from the market, who can, through their connections, anticipate government economic policies and thereby change the conditions originally assumed by the policy makers, and whose investment decisions are the most sensitive to international opportunities for making a profit.

To be sure, our economy experiences some inflation from labor or other supply bottlenecks in one or another sector from time to time (although even that often occurs from the lack of public planning—itself caused in large part by the opposition of private corporations, at least in

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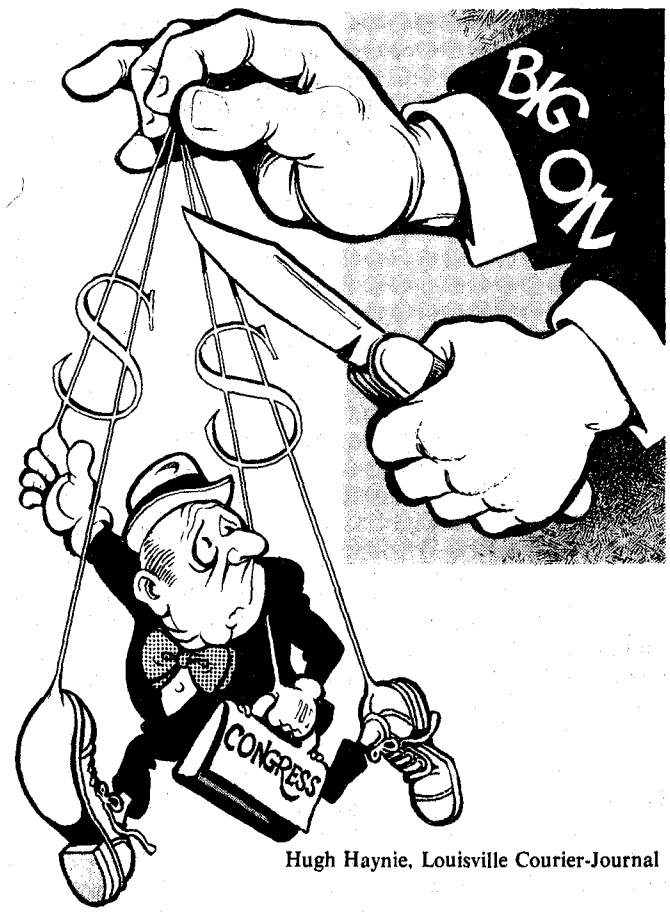
the United States, to public planning). And no one can escape occasional shortages due to real physical scarcities (although, again, planning could facilitate the process of shifting to less-scarce alternatives). But overwhelmingly, we suffer from inflation that is sometimes caused, and *always* exacerbated, by oligopoly. It works in three ways: by profit-push: administered increases in prices, often in anticipation of increased consumer spending; by obtaining government protection against price reductions; and by the vertical integration of entire industries, which eliminates external market exchange entirely in whole areas of the economy.

Orthodox economists are aware of at least some of the influences of oligopoly on inflation. The general tendency of oligopoly prices to rise quickly in response to (or in anticipation of) expanded demand but not to fall quickly (if at all!) in response to (or in anticipation of) declining demand imparts an upward bias to prices that has been recognized by Charles Schultze and Robert Solow (although neither of them seriously proposes action to weaken this power). In twelve months between October 1, 1973 and September 30, 1974, General Motors raised the average retail price of its cars ten separate times for an average increase of more than $800. At the same time, its sales fell by 21 per cent. To be sure, many of its costs rose significantly, notably labor (an additional cost of $2 per hour) and steel (an additional $65 per ton). Nevertheless, if faced with strong competition from other producers or from other means of transport, G.M. would have been forced to absorb some of these higher costs. That it did not—and padded the administered prices even further, by making standard some devices that were formerly optional, by adding in "inflationary expectations," etc.—illustrates the inflationary consequences of oligopoly.

Early in 1975, Federal Trade Commission Chairman Lewis Engman announced his findings that "most regulated industries have become federal protectorates living in a cozy world of cost-plus, protected from the ugly specters of competitive efficiency and innovation." He pointed to decisions of the Civil Aeronautics Board, Interstate Commerce Commission, Department of Agriculture and Federal Communications Commission: "Our airlines, our truckers, our railroads, our electronic media and countless others are on the dole. We get irate about welfare fraud, but our system of hidden regulatory subsidies makes welfare fraud look like petty larceny."

Perhaps the two most dramatic examples in modern times of "larceny" by oligopoly are provided by the automobile industry's systematic destruction of potential competition from mass transit, and the oil industry's power to effect a drastic redistribution of income from labor to capital and to reduce the future independence of consumers from the oil cartel. These case studies illustrate some of the effects of oligopolistic concentration on important areas of the American economy.

Transportation. Introspection and fragmentary evidence have always suggested to some people that it is by no accident that we have become so dependent on cars, busses and trucks for the movement of people and freight. Of all possible forms of transportation, the automobile is socially and privately the most expensive. As urban land



Hugh Haynie, Louisville Courier-Journal

becomes more valuable, and the external diseconomies of sprawl become more apparent, the social consequences of underdeveloped mass transit increase. The real cost of "accessibility" rises and that, too, is inflation.

New evidence has appeared to support the view that our dependence on the private automobile is deliberate. A study, "American Ground Transport," conducted for the Senate Subcommittee on Antitrust and Monopoly by Bradford Snell has unearthed data which show that, beginning in the 1930s, "General Motors and allied highway interests acquired the local transit companies (first in Los Angeles, then in cities across the country), scrapped the pollution-free electric trains, tore down the power transmission lines, ripped up the tracks, and placed G.M. motor busses on already congested . . . streets. The noisy, foul-smelling busses turned earlier patrons of the high-speed rail system away from public transit, and in effect, sold millions of private automobiles."

G.M. also began in the same years to use its virtual monopoly of rail locomotive production and its leverage as the nation's single largest shipper of rail freight to force railroads to scrap their pollution-free electric locomotives in favor of G.M.'s more expensive, less durable and far less efficient diesels. "The switch to diesels prevented the railroads from competing effectively with the cars and trucks G.M. was fundamentally interested in selling." Most of the commuter rail systems, and nearly all of the railroads, were operating in the black until G.M. "invaded" their turf.

For example, Snell writes, "During fifty years of electrified operation [the New Haven Railroad] never failed to show an operating profit. Then, in 1956, G.M. persuaded

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it to tear down the electric lines and scrap an entire fleet of powerful, high-speed electric locomotives. By 1959, three years after dieselization, the New Haven lost $9.2 million. In 1961, it was declared bankrupt; by 1968, when it was acquired by the Penn Central, it had accumulated a deficit of nearly $300 million." After a review of these facts, the ICC, in an unprecedented move, found that General Motors had contributed to the New Haven's "financial ruin."

Snell reminds us that there is more at stake than simply the relative profitability of different private corporations. "The most disturbing aspect of G.M.'s dieselization program is that it eliminated a technological alternative, electric trains, which would have helped the railroads compete with highway transport. Today, when virtually every other advanced nation has electrified its trains, America and what is left of America's railroads are *still* locked in to G.M. diesel locomotives." These examples seriously challenge the "revealed preference" theory—that we "love our cars" and cannot be persuaded to part with them—so close to the hearts of neoclassical economists. Snell's study makes it clear enough that the addiction to road transport hardly resulted from free consumer choice among competing alternatives.

Inflation and the Oil Cartel. Events in the past year have enabled many observers to find in the Arab states a new bogey, responsible for much of our current inflation. But the problem of cartelized oil, with attendant high prices and artificially restricted supplies, existed long before there were any independent modern Arab states. This example merits the closest examination; it tells much about the "wire frame" of Tom Vietorisz's "birdcage." In his words: "Millions of unimportant decisions are made every day in local markets—the soap film covering the wire frame of the birdcage. The really important decisions—the wire frame itself—are less numerous, but far more fundamental. And they are explained by an analysis of power, not competitive advantage."

"The central fact of the petroleum industry," writes Melville Ulmer (*The New Republic*, January 5-12, 1974), "is that the demand for its product is 'inelastic.'. . . So long as the oil barons can maintain discipline in their industry, as they regularly manage to do, it *always* pays to keep prices on an upward track." The Snell study gives an important part of the explanation for the high-price inelasticity of demand for gasoline in America; competing modes of transportation have been systematically destroyed by the auto-gasoline-highway interests. Consumers must continue to pay ever higher prices. What are their alternatives? Intrasuburban mass transit? It does not exist. Commuter railroads? Only a handful of cities have them. Mechanical modes of travel, such as bicycles (or even walking)? Impossible when in the largest cities the average journey to work is longer than 5 miles.

The extraordinary power of the oil industry has not come despite government regulatory constraints. There is ample evidence that regulatory agencies, the White House and Congress have strongly supported and promoted this development. Here again is Ulmer:

> Because of the inelastic demand just described, it is financially advantageous for petroleum producers to keep their customers a little hungry. Here, government has cooperated magnanimously. The Hot Oil Act of 1935 enabled the major producers to exercise control over the nation's output with the obsequious assistance of state agencies. A waiver of the anti-trust laws permits them to integrate fully from oil wells through pipelines, tankers, refineries and retail outlets. The same governmental benevolence encourages them to buy up sellers of potentially competing fuels, especially coal, and to join with British, French, Dutch and Italian companies in international "consortiums." Import quotas, administered by complacent government officials, serve to crown the perfection of their control over the nation's energy supply, and hence of the prices at which it sells. . . . To cap the financial bliss of this sector of our free enterprise system, a 22 per cent depletion allowance virtually absolves the oil companies from the corporation income tax.
>
> The oil industry has been carefully planned, but in the interests of monopoly profits . . . the majors sell part of their crude oil to independent, nonintegrated refiners. By hiking the prices, they can squeeze these potential competitors at will, narrowing their profit margins until they cry "help." Help means sellout or merger. Between 1950 and 1967, according to the Federal Trade Commission, the majors in this way absorbed 73 large independents with aggregate assets of more than six billion dollars. . . .
>
> Regulation by government seems no more effective than hiring Boy Scouts to rout out the Mafia. The oil moguls have demonstrated their talent for cowing or confusing public officials, whether in the Interior Department, the state oil prorating agencies or the White House's Office of Emergency Preparedness. Nor has any government official, concerned with "truth in advertising," ever dared to suggest that the oil companies reveal the homogeneity of gasoline—the treasured trade secret that all gasoline of the same octane rating, like all aspirin, is the same, regardless of the label under which it is sold.

The Economics Division of the Library of Congress recently reported to Rep. John Moss's House Commerce and Finance Subcommittee that Congress and the White House were directly responsible for much of the increase in oil prices. First, it was charged, the Cost of Living Council allowed the companies to increase the price of "old oil" (that from existing wells) from $4.25 to $5.25 a barrel, even though "this is oil that cost, roughly, less than $1 to produce." Excess oil costs to the consumer totaled about $2 billion. Then, the council allowed the price of "new oil"—which costs no more than $2 a barrel, including allowances for depreciation and depletion—to rise to $10.50. This cost consumers about $3.25 billion extra. Then, for each barrel of "new oil" produced, the majors were allowed to raise the price of a barrel of "old oil" still further, resulting in an increased revenue of about $2.23 billion. During the "shortage" of the winter of 1974, the Federal Energy Office permitted retailers to raise their profit margins from 7.25 cents a gallon to 11 cents; that increase has not been cut back since the advent of the summer 1974 sudden "surplus." The Library of Congress researchers estimate that this has added almost $3 billion to consumer costs.

In view of these cost and revenue data, the claim by the oil companies that the supply of oil has not been artificially curtailed is unacceptable. The record shows that the shortages are the result of deliberate policies to restrict output. Since 1956, the industry has cut back its

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exploratory drilling by 60 per cent. As late as 1967, fields in Texas and Louisiana were operating at only 40 per cent of capacity. No new refineries have been built in the United States for ten years; the new ones are being located abroad, near more lucrative markets (India now pays American firms $1.50 retail per gallon). *U.S. News & World Report* estimated that the United States had underground oil deposits of 400 billion barrels (we now consume about 4.3 billion barrels per year). *Business Week* (November 10, 1973) announced that Texas oil wells were pumping only about 30 per cent of the oil lying under their facilities.

The connection between the cartelization of the American-dominated oil industry and the recent behavior of the Mideastern oil countries is only dimly perceived by the media and the public. Last spring, Sen. Frank Church's Foreign Relations Subcommittee released its long-awaited study of this relationship. It charged that the oil companies are the "senior partners," helping the Arabs at State Department request, and being rewarded with the kinds of regulatory and legislative favor described above. One witness, a law professor who worked in President Truman's Justice Department, reported that his 1952 investigation revealed unmistakable evidence of an American-European-Middle Eastern cartel, but that the investigation was called off by the President himself because he feared "it might harm 'national security' by weakening our oil supply coming from the Middle East." The witness, Prof. Leonard Emmerglick of the University of Miami, said the cartel, known as the "Seven Sisters"—Exxon, Texaco, Standard of California, Gulf, Mobil (all American), Shell and British Petroleum—was formed around 1928.

The interests of the cartel were clearly served by the Arab oil boycott of 1973-74. American oil companies still earn dividends on Arab oil sales to other countries (and they own most of the tankers that transport the oil). The U.S. General Accounting Office estimates that, while ARAMCO (Exxon, Mobil, Texaco and Standard of California) sustained production costs of about 12 cents a barrel in 1973 at its Middle Eastern wells, the cartel's profits per barrel rose from 62 cents in 1963 to $1.23 during the 1973 embargo. "These were profits *after* the payment of royalties and taxes to the Arabian governments," according to GAO accountant Shirley Ward.

Oligopolistic power extends beyond price making and the withholding of supply. It means that oil companies can buy up potentially competing fuels such as coal and natural gas (the top four oil companies now own 50 per cent of the natural gas; the top eight own 70 to 80 per cent). They can use their power and wealth to control—usually in order to suppress—new technologies. For example, during World War II, the Nazis made gasoline from coal. After the war, the U.S. Government set up a research project to develop it here. In 1954, under pressure from the oil companies, the Eisenhower administration abandoned the project. The power to destroy competing independent retailers or refiners has already been remarked upon; according to *The Wall Street Journal*, there were more failures of independent gas stations in 1973—5,000 such failures—than in any other postwar year. Independent truckers are also being injured.

Findings such as those I have reported here have led even the conservative Sen. Henry Jackson to conclude that "the fuel shortage is a deliberate, conscious contrivance of the major integrated petroleum companies to destroy the independent refiners and marketers, to capture new markets, to increase gasoline prices and to obtain repeal of environmental protection legislation." An FTC study leaked to the press in the summer of 1973, but never subsequently published, similarly concluded that "the oil companies have behaved . . . as would a classical monopolist: they have attempted to increase profits by restricting output." This charge received support when the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, in March 1974, disclosed a confidential memo written by economists working for Standard Oil of California back in 1968—long before any Arab boycott threats. According to *The Wall Street Journal*, the company economists "recommended strong measures to prevent an oversupply of crude oil, including production cutbacks. [They] also assured that all of the major international companies would act concurrently to hold production down rather than see prices drop."

Finally, an unusual grand jury in New York returned a report to the state's Attorney General, concluding that "the recent petroleum shortages [in New York] were clearly avoidable and may have triggered the Arab oil embargo. . . . It's a fair question to ask whether the Arabs would have imposed the embargo at all if the [United States] had had adequate reserves."

What was the Nixon administration's (and now, presumably, the Ford Administration's) response to all of this? In February 1974, Budget Director Roy Ash announced a preliminary "plan," in which "the government's role will be primarily to assist industry. . . . Antitrust laws may be modified to permit cooperation among oil companies. Environmental laws will have to be reshaped to permit rapid development of offshore oil, coal strip mines, oil shale, and other energy sources. Research and development programs of new sources of energy, such as solar and geothermal energy, will be promoted. This burden will have to be borne primarily by the government," Ash said, "because the costs will be very high and the return too remote to interest private investors." Ash minimized the effects of the price increases. He said "it will amount to a 'one-time' cost of only about $50 billion—or only 4 per cent of the GNP. Once the economy has adjusted to the higher price level . . . it will continue to grow without long-term ill effects."

These two brief case studies demonstrate, I believe, the overt use of political and economic power by two highly concentrated industries to increase their share of the national income, enhance their power and destroy potential competitors—not by offering a better product, more efficiently produced, but by bludgeoning their opponents to death. And all with the active support of the state.

A study of inflation that fails to assign a central role to the power of concentrated industry cannot hope to succeed. The giant corporation is the central institution of advanced monopoly capitalism; it affects every aspect of economic life. Magazine writers may concoct lists of *ad hoc* causes of inflation until the cows come home. The *systemic* causes are to be found in the industrial structure. □

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

Always in Crisis—and Still Here

AMERICA AND THE CRISIS OF WORLD CAPITALISM. *By Joyce Kolko. Beacon Press. 202 pp. $7.95.*

JAMES M. CYPHER

In this short book Joyce Kolko presents a highly condensed summary of the causes and consequences of worldwide capitalist developments which have led to the current international economic crisis. This is a highly ambitious endeavor. Nevertheless, Kolko manages to marshal a dazzling number of arguments, theories and propositions which on the whole convincingly demonstrate the general validity of the following theme:

> . . . capitalism cannot be successfully planned, and the attempts to do so by orthodox economics only generate new crises through the inexorable competitive struggle between company and company, industry and industry, nation and nation as capitalist states move to defend their most powerful sector.

There can be no doubt that this book is highly successful in raising the important questions concerning the instability of world capitalism while demonstrating the ways in which the contradictions of world capitalism have resulted, and will result, in new pressures toward crisis.

The primary emphasis of this book is not on the American economy but rather upon the integration of the world economy. Kolko clearly feels that the dynamic factors which determine the direction of world capitalism are increasingly found in the international arena. Kolko's brief treatment of the American economy is largely confined to an explanation of how international pressures contributed to the failure of Nixon's attempts to control the recession which started in 1969.

The booming American economy from 1964 to 1968 produced an inflationary environment which encouraged the importation of manufactured goods from Europe and Japan. The boom resulted in an accelerating inflation as politicians were unwilling to raise taxes for a politically unpopular war. Rising imports and large foreign military expenditures resulted in the serious balance-of-payments deficit of the late 1960s. To stem the inflation and to reduce imports Nixon reacted by tightening up on the money supply (thus raising interest rates) and reducing federal expenditures in 1969 and 1970. All of this tended to create a crisis for American corporations because they were too far in debt to withstand the contraction without serious risk of widespread bankruptcies. American corporations sought relief from the foreign competition they were facing, and were successful in persuading Nixon to adopt a new tariff policy of protection in August 1971. But the Europeans fought against the tariff by lowering the prices of their goods while simultaneously resisting a reduction of the dollar in relation to their currencies because they feared cheaper American exports. America countered by devaluing the dollar in relation to gold in December 1971. The devaluation failed, however, to end the outflow of dollars to Europe because U.S. corporations and banks still felt that the dollar was overvalued. Nixon failed to solve the balance-of-payments deficit and the U.S. inflation, but he did manage to set off a worldwide recession in 1969.

This international crisis of capitalism was relieved only when it became obvious that the American economy could not withstand the deflationary policies of 1969 and 1970. Thus in 1972 Nixon was forced to engineer a large budget deficit, an expansion of the money supply and a reduction of the prime interest rate. All of this acted to stimulate the American economy as well as the European and Japanese economies, and kicked off a new round of destabilizing inflation.

Increasingly, Kolko argues, actions in one part of the world economy are quickly reproduced elsewhere. America cannot take actions without affecting the entire world economy, and vice versa. But this, argues Kolko, makes for increasing world economic instability. Fifteen years ago a recession in America would have been countered by (perhaps) a boom in Germany. Now a reduction in business in Germany means a general breakdown in the European Economic Community (EEC)—which means a slowdown in the rate of investment in Europe by U.S. corporations, which means a slowdown in the American economy.

The primary reason for the growing interdependence and therefore instability of world capitalism has been the unprecedented postwar growth in multinational corporations. As Kolko takes pains to demonstrate, the major multinationals are clearly American-dominated, and totally integrated with and dependent upon the national power of the United States. The increasing power and concentration of the multinationals (187 U.S. corporations hold 76 per cent of all U.S. direct foreign investment) creates additional contradictions in that American workers lose their jobs to Third World workers who work for 10 to 30 cents an hour, while smaller American companies find that they cannot afford to produce in the United States against the large multinationals. A further contradiction is found in the fact that the U.S. multinationals account for 34 per cent of total imports—imports which contribute to America's long-standing balance-of-payments problem.

The federal government is burdened with the impossible task of attempting to reconcile these contradictions and clashes of interest. In the attempt to come to terms with these contradictions the Nixon administration looked with favor upon the Japanese "miracle" as providing a possible answer to the international dilemmas with which they were confronted. To some degree, it seems that the Japanese model of state aid to corporations and low wages for the workers is now being realized in the United States. Certainly the general reduction in workers' real take-home pay in the last two years is to some degree connected with the federal government's desire to make American goods competitive abroad. Further integration of the state with private interests through subsidies and tax write-offs seems now to be in the offing. There can be little doubt that the current crisis in the United States is serving to "discipline" labor. But, such solutions are counter-productive in that they can only produce similar acts of retrenchment throughout the capitalist world, thus increasing the probability of a simultaneous cutback in production which will further destabilize the global economy.

The decline of the dollar is inextricably tied up with the rise of the European economy. Changes in the value of money, however, are merely symptoms of changes in economic power relationships. Kolko feels that the power relationships between the United States and Europe changed in 1957-58 when a declining rate of profitability in the United States was more than balanced by the creation of new investment opportunities in Europe—arising from the formation of the EEC.

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Throughout the 1960s, one of the major reasons for the poor balance-of-payments position was the outflow of investment dollars into the booming EEC. Another cause was the transference of currency to take advantage of high interest yields in Europe—the Eurodollar market. To this must be added, of course, the billions of dollars which annually have gone to support military bases abroad, and the cost of grants to puppet regimes—the costs of empire. Since the decline of the dollar is primarily related to real, rather than monetary phenomena, devaluations cannot fundamentally alter the balance-of-payments deficit, Kolko argues. The real rate of return on investments and currency transfers in Europe has remained above that within the United States, and funds have continued to flow abroad. Moreover, the United States cannot do without its empire and retain its hegemony, so the only way to eliminate the deficit is to increase productive investments in the United States and thereby raise worker productivity (or, as has been happening for the past three years, lower real wages through increasing inflation at a greater rate than money wages increase). Given the strong European and Japanese import competition, and given the strong competition of U.S.-owned multinationals whose products (as imports) form part of the payments deficit, devaluation becomes a limited short-run tool.

While the U.S. economy has been faced with diminishing prospects in recent years, the European economies have not fared much better. Kolko attributes the postwar success of the European and Japanese economies to five factors. First, the success of Germany and Japan has been inextricably tied up with American military spending for NATO, the Korean War, for troops abroad, and for the Vietnamese War. A second factor has been the artificial international liquidity based upon the flood of dollars into the world economy in the postwar years. Such international capital flows made possible the vast expansion of plant and equipment throughout Europe. Cheap labor was another factor in the equation. The Europeans could draw upon vast numbers of unemployed in the early 1950s and later upon workers from the Mediterranean region. Japan could draw upon a surplus of workers in the agricultural sector. In addition, relatively loose bank lending in Europe and Japan made it possible for industries in these countries to expand with little equity. The fifth and final factor which Kolko feels was significant in the rise of America's rivals was a booming export market—particularly the U.S. market. But, says Kolko, ". . . none of the real causal factors in the 'miracle economies' growth rates depended on domestic features within the control of the government or the industrial leaders involved."

Since 1968 the five factors which contributed to the "economic miracles" have in varying degrees ceased to buoy those economies. Labor has turned hostile and aggressive. Furthermore, unions are not only demanding higher wages but more often than not they are calling into question the very nature of the hierarchical structure of work under capitalism. This new militancy is to Kolko another highly significant cause for the increasing instability of worldwide capitalism. Surprisingly, perhaps, the capitalists of Europe and Japan have attempted to fight back by moving *their* operations to Third World countries. Even Japanese capitalists have fought "high wages" by moving to Taiwan, South Korea and Hong Kong. But runaway shops in Europe and Japan create the same contradictions for those economies that such runaways create for the United States. Who can buy the products of these factories when European and Japanese workers are unemployed?

Given the relatively stagnant position of the "economic miracles" now that they have saturated their markets with plant and equipment as well as the consumer products deriving from these investments, Kolko anticipates increasing international rivalry, competition and instability. ". . . Conflict is now endemic, and as the struggle for markets intensifies and protectionism follows, hostility will only grow. It is a struggle for materials in times of full production and a struggle for markets during stagnation and recession."

Kolko finds that while the dynamics of the postwar economy have created an integrated world capitalist system, the Third World continues to operate on the distant fringes of this system. The only growth which has been achieved in the Third World has been due to the increasing needs of the integrated world capitalist system. Multinational corporations have utilized cheap labor and Third World capital to construct runaway shops, but this has fostered underdevelopment in that it has left no capital for the Third World countries to utilize for their own needs. Thus dependency, inequality and unemployment (usually 30 per cent or more) have *increased* in the Third World in the postwar years.

Kolko concludes her analysis of the Third World with one rather interesting and novel argument. She feels that the underdeveloped countries are not subsidizing consumers within the integrated world capitalist economy. Rather, the Third World is subsidizing multinational corporations. Multinationals buy products and labor cheaply in the Third World but they sell in the integrated world capitalist markets at full monopoly prices, says Kolko. Thus she takes issue with one long-standing assumption concerning the advantages of imperialism—that consumers benefit through cheap products. If Kolko is correct, then there is absolutely no reason why workers in the integrated capitalist economies should support the exploitation of the Third World.

In a brief final passage, Kolko suggests that it is entirely possible that the United States will again stimulate its economy through Third World military intervention. Yet she is confident that ". . . the operations of the capitalist system can and will engineer [the system's] demise." But this does not necessarily mean that socialism will inevitably be achieved, she notes, as the collapse of the system may result in either world war or fascism.

Throughout the historical period dominated by capitalism, it has not been difficult to belabor the contradictions of capitalism and to argue that such a system *must* be on its last leg. Indeed, had this book been written in 1933, Kolko undoubtedly would have been much more pessimistic in projecting a future for capitalism. Yet capitalism in a somewhat altered form has survived. Holistic social science of the type to which Kolko aspires should attempt to ascertain the degree to which the forces of disintegration are balanced off by the forces of continuity. These conflicting forces always exist simultaneously in any historical period. A work such as this suffers to some degree in that the author is a bit too insistent in her stress upon the forces leading to crisis. If historically unprecedented conditions which are now exhausted were the causal factors in the rise of Europe and Japan, is it not possible that some other historically unprecedented conditions can be found again? Capitalism, after all, is an extremely resilient system.

While minor objections could be raised against many aspects of the book, it is nevertheless clear that Joyce Kolko has synthesized and integrated a great deal of material which until now has remained isolated in books which have been devoted to special aspects of the current crisis. She has undertaken an extremely difficult task and done a remarkable job. □

MOLE

Because the pilgrim on the low road
Requires no shadow,
Our own darken
Doubly.

By this grace and no other
In the broad light
Is the balance
Tipped,

Holding us
Tentatively to earth.

Thomas Johnson

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Smart Aleck of American Letters

SERPENT IN EDEN: H.L. Mencken and the South. *By Fred C. Hobson, Jr. University of North Carolina Press. 242 pp. $8.95.*

ROBERT BOYD

At his death in 1956, H.L. Mencken was eulogized in terms which surely would have embarrassed and angered him had he been around to read them. Fifteen years of decreasing activity and eight of incapacitation had rendered him as nearly obscure as it is possible for a man of his stripe to become. His vitriol had been so diluted by time that he was remembered with nostalgia and sentimental affection—exactly the sort of treacle against which he had so often inveighed. For the following decade he was thought of, when he was thought of at all, as the man who had once asked us to honor his memory by forgiving a sinner or winking at an ugly girl. He became, in the public mind, a sort of literary W.C. Fields, a man whose seamy qualities could be overlooked because of the corny brilliance of his invective. Quite forgotten was Mencken the vicious misanthrope, the man who could and did destroy human beings without a qualm. Forgotten was the narcissistic hypochondriac whose obituary of William Jennings Bryan was perhaps the cruelest piece of journalism ever seen in this country. Mencken's elaborate vendetta against Bryan, from the dispatches sent back to Baltimore from the trenches at Dayton to the obituary, shows clearly that he could hate as adamantly and as mindlessly as any of the Yahoos he excoriated.

Yet even when the current revival of scholarly interest in Mencken's life and works began, about 1966, there was little apparent effort to correct the imbalance in the public image. Writers like William Nolte and Sara Mayfield gave us bits of "literary" biography; even Carl Bode, in what is the closest thing we have to a definitive life, showed a distressing tendency to romanticize. Douglas Stenerson's *H.L. Mencken: Iconoclast from Baltimore*, published in 1971, throws some light on the darker side of the subject's character, but ignores his life after his retirement from the *Mercury* in 1933. Thus the field is still open for a good, scholarly, objective biography, though we may have to wait until after the last of Mencken's papers are opened to researchers in 1991.

Fred Hobson's book is objective, all right, though perhaps not so much by design as by subconscious force. He acknowledges Mencken's failures and weaknesses, but still displays the admiring awe that Mencken, like so many other autocrats, had the power to evoke in his public. It is in the imagery he chooses to describe Mencken and his actions that one finds evidence of a slightly different attitude, beginning of course with the title of the book. Elsewhere Mencken is a "shark" whose role in literature is "primarily destructive"; his tools are the "butcher's cleaver and club" or "axe and bludgeon." His sentences "follow one another like pistons." The point of this simile is obscure, but the implications of the comparison are intriguing, especially the suggestion that Mencken, like a machine, represented a sort of inhuman power.

But this is quibbling, and Hobson's book is too solid to be approached frivolously. It is not a biography at all; rather, it is a study of Mencken's influence on the literature and culture of the South, especially on the writers of the so-called "Southern Renascence" in the early 1920s and on the Fugitives group somewhat later. With painstaking scholarship, Hobson explores the direct and indirect connections between Mencken and such figures as James Branch Cabell, Gerald W. Johnson (who provides the very skillful foreword to this book) and Frances Newman, and later between Mencken and Tate, Ransome and Donald Davidson. Also carefully detailed are the relationships between Mencken and the editors of such influential little magazines as the Richmond *Reviewer* and the New Orleans *Double Dealer*, which was to nurture Faulkner, among others. The span of time Hobson deals with is that between the publication, in *Prejudices, Second Series*, of Mencken's essay "The Sahara of the Bozart"—in which, among other pleasantries, he describes the South as a cultural desert, a "gargantuan paradise of the fourth-rate," peopled by "poor white trash"—and the appearance in 1931 of *I'll Take My Stand*, the book of essays in which Donaldson and others of the Southern agrarians provided a ringing refutation of Mencken's hostile generalizations about their culture.

There is no doubt that Hobson has done exhaustive research, and the weight of his evidence discourages casual objections by reviewers less expert than he, but one is nevertheless inclined to wonder whether his implication that Mencken was single-handedly responsible for dragging the South, kicking and screaming, into the "Renascence" might not be a bit too ambitious. In the end, Hobson sees Mencken not so much as a literary critic or even a journalist but rather as an arbiter of taste and a kind of literary field marshal, dispensing editorial advice, preparing grand strategy, and firing an occasional salvo from the sanctuary of Baltimore. It is an interesting point, and Hobson makes it convincingly. It leads away, though, from what other scholars are inclined to think will be the proper focus for any ultimate evaluation of Mencken's role in American letters—namely, his brilliance as a stylist. Curmudgeon that he was, and Hobson helps us remember just how much of a curmudgeon he was, it remains true that he was a brilliant writer, the first man in our literature to raise invective to the level of art. □

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On Women Writers

CONSTANCE AYERS DENNE and KATHARINE M. ROGERS

For the recent annual convention of the Modern Language Association in New York, we invited Elizabeth Hardwick, Erica Jong, Nancy Milford and Elaine Showalter to consider the question "Are Women Writers a Distinct Group?" All are actively involved with writing and feminism—Jong as a novelist and poet, Hardwick as the author of *Seduction and Betrayal: Women and Literature*, Milford as a biographer of women writers (Zelda Fitzgerald and Edna St. Vincent Millay), and Showalter as a scholar who has just completed a book on the female tradition in the English novel. The response to the panel was extraordinary. Hundreds attended, and were both stimulated and provoked by the freewheeling discussion.

Showalter drew attention to the dilemma which arises from any attempt to define a "feminine element." Identifying certain characteristics of work or sensibility as "feminine" tends to reinforce the traditional stereotypes—women are sensitive, emotional, good with detail. On the other hand, to maintain that women's writing is or should be indistinguishable from men's implies a denial of their own feelings and experience. Since women's experience and awareness are different, surely women falsify them if they try to write just like men. Elizabeth Hardwick raised yet another difficulty, the number of exceptions to any generalization one might make. "I sometimes think the greatest American female novelist is Henry James," she said. "It interests me to try to find qualities that are in women writers, but I keep thinking they aren't true." Nevertheless, she did find

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certain characteristic qualities—a high degree of wit in Jane Austen, Ivy Compton-Burnett and Iris Murdoch; a scientific and intellectual love for the "absolutely microscopic but perfectly realized detail" in poets like Emily Dickinson, Marianne Moore and Elizabeth Bishop.

Jong recalled an experience in her sophomore writing class at Barnard, in which a distinguished male writer told her and her classmates that they would *never* be writers: "You women don't have access to the subject matter that men have access to. You don't know about . . . sleeping in the streets or about . . . sleeping from bed to bed." She told the story to show how aspiring female writers are made to despise their subject matter, and added: "He could just as well have said, Jane Austen never knew what it was to be sleeping in the streets, she never went to brothels, but she was a good writer anyway. She made what she could out of the subject matter she knew."

No apology is necessary. Women have plenty of experience to write from: growing up female, female sexuality and motherhood, women's relationships with one another and female-male relationships—described from the woman's point of view. In our male-dominated literature, such experience is greatly underrepresented. Women need, as Milford said, to see such things in literature in order to illuminate their own experience. Yet as Hardwick cautioned, subject matter ought not to be legislated.

The woman writer suffers doubly from cultural bias. On the one hand, her distinctive subject matter is disparaged. Doris Lessing's descriptions (in *A Proper Marriage*) of giving birth and looking after a toddler were condemned as dull by reviewers who praise descriptions of warfare as truly significant. Yet, Jong declared, a woman is not as free as a male writer to range over the whole field of human experience. She is attacked equally for "feminine" sentimentality or for "masculine" bravado, damned if she works within traditional limitations, and damned if she tries to break out of them. Milford suggested that a woman might not dare to "risk the kind of writing which could be considered enormously female—puffy, sensitive . . . detailed, graceful." Though that may be the natural and proper style for her, she may feel she must avoid it lest she fall into the feminine stereotype. An artist, however, should not be limited by such self-consciousness about her or his image.

The male artist's greater freedom from inhibition helps to account for a characteristic which Hardwick noted in women's writing: a woman is less apt to submerge herself in a character she creates, at least a character of the opposite sex; she would not say, as Flaubert did, "I am Madame Bovary." "We put a greater distance between us and men than they do when they write about women." Hardwick implied that this separation was a strength in women writers, signifying greater objectivity and rationality. Jong interpreted it as a weakness—that women cannot achieve the identification with protagonists that we see in great male authors: "Men feel they have a right to the female consciousness. Women can never project into a male consciousness without being told that they write like men, that they want to be men, that they are castrating bitches." Milford added that, while the male artist feels he can draw on both male and female potential, a woman would not risk claiming "male thrust, aggression, grabbing an environment, entering into an active full life."

Showalter thinks it is now "possible for women to understand men's lives completely," but that they are still inhibited by the assumption that it is a far more challenging task for a woman to create a satisfactory male character than for a man to create a female. It is harder, that is, for a woman than for a man to enter the consciousness of the opposite sex. (And yet Joyce Carol Oates has again and again—in *them* and *Wonderland*, for example—successfully made a male voice her own.)

One reason why gifted male writers use a female consciousness, Jong suggested, is that their women characters, such as Anna Karenina, often "express the non-rational, the emotional parts of their own nature." Thus they can feel at one with the woman because she is really part of themselves. Because women characters represent the natural, passionate side of men, they may be permitted more emotional freedom and spontaneity, and therefore appear more interesting and complex, as is the wife in Ingmar Bergman's *Scenes from a Marriage*.

On the other hand, women characters may be reduced by their symbolic function to partial human beings. Jong complained that women characters can either "be all brain and no body, or . . . all body and no brain." But when a writer tries "to bring the two together, people become outraged." People are saying Isadora Wing is a brainless broad, for the idea that women should be both intellectual and sexual is "profoundly disturbing in our culture, disturbing to both men and women." For this reason, heroines are severely punished for their sexuality, even in literature by women. Mary McCarthy's heroine in *A Charmed Life* goes to bed once with her ex-husband, "gets pregnant, and is killed off by the author in the next-to-the-last paragraph." Unconsciously, writers do not permit women a full emotional life. As a writer, Jong sees it as her task to represent a female human being with a body as well as a mind—and then to get readers and critics to receive her as such.

Although Jong aimed to create a female character who works toward intellectual, emotional and sexual fulfillment, Isadora Wing's most obvious liberation is of course sexual. Hardwick pointed out that liberation should be intellectual as well, meaning that a woman should have confidence that her mind is as good as a man's, so that she can feel equally free to think and be original, and also be ready to "take the punishment for having ideas" that society metes out "to both men and women." Milford too expressed her desire for a liberated role model. Even contemporary heroines tend to be painfully limited: the heroine of Doris Lessing's *The Summer Before the Dark* accepts a maternal job, looking after delegates to a world conference, and even when she runs off with a young man does not have fulfilling sexual experience but ends up nursing him when he becomes ill. There is a need for female role models who live independently and enjoy adult fulfillment. But can such women be presented without sacrificing realism? Are the comic adventures and tentative independence of Isadora Wing the most that can be expected at this time? Obviously a writer should not sacrifice her vision of truth to a doctrinal purpose.

Although women writers today are free from the total financial dependence on father or husband which restricted their ancestors, they have not entirely escaped the subtle pressure to avoid male disapproval. Jong defined this precisely: "It's not that you consciously sit down and say, now I will lie. I will depict him as glorious when he is a bastard. But you suddenly warp your own mind so as not to be offensive, so as not to say anything too troublesome." It is not glaring deception (which would be easier to expose and reform); rather, the woman has been subtly conditioned to see the man as better than he is and to suppress feelings and opinions which would alienate him. Today as in the past, Milford added, there are "classes of permitted troublesomeness." Now women can write about their sexuality, but—as Hardwick pointed out—we are not necessarily free just because "we can put sex freely into novels."

Freedom for women writers means freedom from self-consciousness—from anxiety about whether to conform to a limiting feminine stereotype or be condemned for

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invading masculine territory. Showalter traced the progress of women writers from imitation, "in which a tremendous amount of energy goes into proving that . . . [they can achieve] the three-decker novel, the epic poem, or whatever," through "intense protest in which this group . . . tries to define its own heritage and its own aesthetic, but still very dependently, still in terms of what is *not* the dominant culture," to a phase of "universality," where there is "freedom to use all experience" and no self-consciousness of being a separate group. We look forward to the time when the question of whether women writers are a distinct group will no longer be raised because women writers, like other women, will be part of the total culture. □

Book Marks

CAREY McWILLIAMS

AGITATO: A Trek Through the Musical Jungle. *By Jerome Toobin. The Viking Press. 213 pp. $7.95.*

For nine years—1954 to 1963—Jerry Toobin struggled valiantly to keep an orchestra alive, the Symphony of the Air. That he did not succeed was due to no lack of determination, persistence or courage in the face of monstrous difficulties. In the course of this battle for an ideal he was exposed to the ways and mannerisms of some of the most publicized "names" in modern American music and he observed them shrewdly and fairly and has much of interest to say about them. An immensely amusing book, full of droll stories and hilarious incidents. Through it all Toobin's passion for music and his acute judgments lift the book out of the category of a personal adventure. It should be read also for what he has to say about the economics of symphony orchestras and the insightful glimpses of the turbulent world of music—offstage. A fine music critic was lost when Toobin became a distinguished producer for Public Television.

THE PUERTO RICANS. *By Kal Wagenheim with Olga Jimenez de Wagenheim. Anchor Books-Doubleday. 420 pp. $3.50.*

Originally published in hardcover in 1973. An excellent "documentary history" of Puerto Rico, its problems, present status, tensions and prospects. Kal Wagenheim has contributed to *The Nation.*

CHICANO PRISONERS: The Key to San Quentin. *By R. Theodore Davidson. Holt, Rinehart and Winston. 196 pp. $4.*

An excellent study of prison culture. The author, an anthropologist, spent some twenty months at San Quentin Prison (1966-68) under conditions favorable to honest inquiry and observation. He "tells it like it is." This is prison life as the prisoner experiences it. The conclusions are not surprising but the materials—and observations—are fascinating.

PABLO CRUZ AND THE AMERICAN DREAM: The Experiences of an Undocumented Immigrant from Mexico. *Compiled by Eugene Nelson. Introduction by Julian Samora. Illustrations by Carlos Cortez. Peregrine Smith. 171 pp. $8.95.*

Eugene Nelson, as part of a study of Mexican immigrants, recorded the story of a former illegal entrant. Later he spent four months in Durango, Mexico, where the tapes were transcribed and the materials arranged in chronological order. A unique document in that it sets forth the typical experience of an illegal entrant from the point of view of the "wetback" and as told by him. Incidentally, a handsome piece of bookmaking.

TRYING OUT THE DREAM: A Year in the Life of an American Family. *By Paul Wilkes. J.B. Lippincott Co. 366 pp. $9.95.*

A great deal is said these days about investigative reporting but one variant of the form receives less attention than it deserves. This book is an example. Thinly disguised as a novel, it is really straight reporting. Paul Wilkes spent the year 1972 observing at close range the "most average" American family he could find, using the best sociological indicators and guidelines. He keeps himself out of the story with admirable detachment and yet manages to give us the Neumeyers (not the family's real name) with realism and perception. This is investigative journalism at its best, a little less exciting than Watergate but a story that makes severe demands on the skill and integrity of the reporter. Wilkes has written for *The Nation.*

DOWN AND OUT IN BERKELEY. *By Jim Baumohl and Henry Miller. Prepared for the City of Berkeley-University of California Community Affairs Committee. 80 pp.*

Part of an excellent ongoing study of "street people" in Berkeley with some excellent photographs. Included are seven case histories.

IN THE CITY OF MEN: Another Story of Chicago. *By Kenny J. Williams. Townsend Press. 483 pp. $12.50.*

This is indeed "another story of Chicago" and one of very real interest, for all its informality and discursiveness. It contains, for example, a fine chapter on "The Literary Promise of the City" and a chapter on its architecture. In fact, the book in a sense revolves around Louis Sullivan, the architect, and Henry Blake Fuller, the novelist. The author received her Ph.D. at the University of Pennsylvania and now teaches at Northeastern Illinois University in Chicago.

THE ASSASSINATION TAPES: An Electronic Probe into the Murder of John F. Kennedy and the Dallas Coverup. *By George O'Toole. The Penthouse Press. 265 pp. $8.95.*

Of special interest to assassination buffs, this study is a better written and more plausible treatise than other recent offerings in the same field. The author spent some years with the CIA as a computer specialist. While with that agency he specialized in finding ways to use electronic information processing techniques to solve problems in intelligence analysis. He didn't convince me of the soundness of his thesis but he held my attention.

Brant Point
Poems by
Alexander Laing

As writer and teacher, Alexander Laing has held to his central conviction that poetry is the best excuse for man's continuance on his misused planetary home. Most of the poems in *Brant Point* are recent. A few that support developing themes have been selected from those published earlier, themes which include metaphysical, ethical, and political aspects.
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THE QUESTION OF GOVERNMENT: An Inquiry into the Breakdown of Modern Political Systems. *By David Fromkin. Charles Scribner's Sons. 228 pp. $8.95.*

An original analysis of how government stands with us at the present time. As the author sees it, the Industrial Revolution was misjudged in two respects. First, it wrought greater changes in the *scale* of human activity than we had imagined, perhaps the greatest changes in history; and second, it eroded social cohesion to a degree that made government, in the true sense, next to impossible. The changes are of a kind that make it necessary to bring the totality of public activity within the framework of government; there is no unseen hand to repair the damage of improvident action today. Fromkin does not back away from the implications of this thesis: planning is necessary, coordination is necessary, the notion that the general interest will take care of itself is "a form of intellectual draft dodging." In a world of "finite resources and of expanding demand for them, somebody must plan to deal with the pressures, dislocations, shortages and inflations that result." But governments break down today precisely because society will not accept the need for priorities and planning, "believing that one thing can be gained without giving up another." Thus what must be done, in his view, is that techniques be developed which will offset the socially disintegrating tendencies of the Industrial Revolution. Alas, "nobody yet has seen a truly modern government," but the author feels one can be evolved and must be, for government is the answer—but government itself is, just now, the question. A provocative, original study that deserves more attention than it is likely to receive.

CHICANO POWER: The Emergence of Mexican America. *By Tony Castro. Saturday Review Press. 243 pp. $3.95.*

An interesting study of the rise of Chicano power by a young journalist who now writes for the Houston *Post*. One of the better studies in this field.

THIS IS CALIFORNIA: Please Keep Out! *By Art Seidenbaum. Peter H. Wyden Publishers. 268 pp. $7.95.*

California has been discovered with a vengeance during the last thirty years; the number of books dealing with modern California has pretty much kept pace with the increase in population and in the state's economic and political power. This is one of the more readable of these recent studies, by the well-known columnist of the *Los Angeles Times* who first came to Los Angeles in 1959. This makes him, of course, a newcomer, but diligent inquiry and a sharp eye have offset the disadvantages of late arrival.

THE PULSE OF FREEDOM: American Liberties, 1920-1970s. *Edited by Alan Reitman. Foreword by Ramsey Clark. W.W. Norton & Co. 352 pp. $12.50.*

An extremely valuable survey of American liberties over the span of the last fifty years. Of particular value is the chapter on "McCarthyism Rampant" by John W. Caughey. The volume is edited by Alan Reitman who has been in the thick of many of the actions reported. There is no better survey of this kind in print.

THE END OF CULTURE: Essays on Sensibility in Contemporary Society. *By Kingsley Widmer. San Diego State University Press. 267 pp. Paper $7.95.*

Critical and insightful essays on culture in our time: "processed culture," "rebellious culture," "on the inadequacies of culture" and, lastly, on the ends and end of culture. An original, radical point of view. What makes Widmer's analysis so interesting is that he does his own thinking. He belongs to no "schools," adheres to no "models," and belongs to no sectarian grouping. Of special interest are essays on "The Beat Movement," "Some Present Anarchists" and "Some Reflections on the Way to a Libertarian Culture." Many of these essays, in a slightly different form, first appeared in *The Nation.*

AN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE. *By Allan Ashbolt. Victor Gollancz, London; Alpha Books, Australia. 383 pp. $2.95. Paper $1.75.*

A refreshingly realistic and radical view of American society not by a weekend visitor but by a man who spent some years in this country as correspondent for the ABC (Australian Broadcasting Company). Contains fine chapters on "The Cry of Corruption," "The Automobile Civilization," "Punditry and Public Relations in the Press," and "Where Is It Now, the Glory and the Dream?" This volume should long ago have been published in this country, and probably would have been if the author had been an Englishman and not an Australian.

AN AUSTRALIAN EXPERIENCE: Words from the Vietnam Years. *By Allan Ashbolt. Australian Book Society. 400 pp. $7.95. Paper $4.50.*

Excellent reporting on Australian society during the years of the war in Vietnam. Of particular interest is the chapter on "Patterns in U.S.-Australian Relationships."

JOHN STEINBECK: THE ERRANT KNIGHT. An Intimate Biography of his California Years. *By Nelson Valjean. Chronicle Books. 184 pp. $8.95.*

A useful but by no means inspired account of John Steinbeck's California years. The author is apparently not familiar with Jackson Benson's research into the career of Tom Collins, to whom *The Grapes of Wrath* was dedicated. And there are some other gaps and oversights but, on the whole, a worthwhile effort.

THE FORGING OF AN AMERICAN JEW: The Life and Times of Judge Julian W. Mack. *By Harry Barnard. Herzl Press. 348 pp. $7.95.*

Harry Barnard, biographer of John Peter Altgeld, Rutherford B. Hayes and Sen. James Couzens, has turned his talents to re-creating the career of Judge Julian W. Mack, one of the pioneers of Juvenile Court reform (in Chicago), and long a member of the Federal Circuit Court where he served with distinction along with Justices Learned Hand and Augustus Hand. Judge Mack's "Chicago ways" brought a new freshness to the somewhat staid atmosphere of the court. He was a liberal, a reformer, one of the leaders of American and world Jewry, an Overseer of Harvard College. He was also one of the backers of *Survey* and *Survey Graphic*, a founder of the New School of Social Research and, incidentally, long a good friend of *The Nation.* Harry Barnard has been a *Nation* contributor for many years. □

FILMS / Robert Hatch

Coming back from vacation late in July, I expected everyone in New York to be talking about the impending bankruptcy of the city, symbolized by the hills of black plastic garbage bags that line the less affluent streets. I was right about that, but what I hadn't expected was that, in the second breath, my friends would tell me what sum of money they would not accept to set foot in salt water this summer. All of them, it seemed, had been to see *Jaws*—not surprising, since the film was, and still is, playing to packed houses in thirteen theatres of the five boroughs, plus dozens more in the nearby suburbs, and they were in a mild state of shock from having watched a 25-foot great white shark dismember bathers in waist-deep New England playground waters. Never mind that holiday crowds by the millions dunk themselves in the Atlantic summer after summer without losing so much as a toe—my friends had

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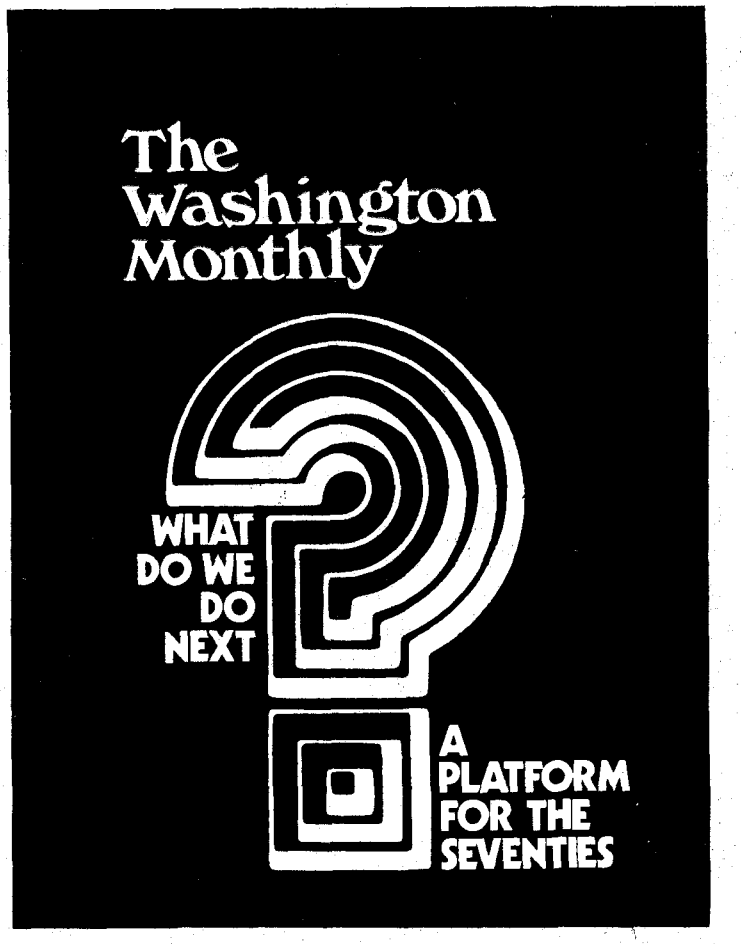

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seen the fanged horror at his ghastly meals, or thought they had, which comes to the same thing.

Cinematic horror is not my dish—I have not, for instance, seen *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (partly because I own a chain saw), which played in New York some months ago and is now, I learn from a publicity release, "packing them in at drive-ins around the country." But *Jaws* appeared to be a phenomenon of considerable size, and I decided to screw up my courage and go.

It wasn't as taxing as I'd feared. For one thing, the munching scenes occupy a very small part of the picture—in all, maybe five minutes of roiling, bloody water—and for another, when you really get to see the dreadful beast, it looks very much like a marvelous piece of mechanical hocus-pocus (so marvelous, in fact, that building and operating it was the major cost of a very expensive movie). Underwater shots of pale legs dangling in the water add some moments of acute tension, and that's almost the total bill, as far as horror goes. And aside from horror, *Jaws* is a well-constructed family entertainment film, Carl Gottlieb having trimmed and accelerated Peter Benchley's reportedly rather steamy novel into a script that employs two of Hollywood's most ingratiating formulas. The first of these is the *High Noon* confrontation, in which the honest cop battles it out single-handed with the venal town fathers. In this case Police Chief Brody (Roy Scheider) pits himself against Mayor Vaughn (Murray Hamilton), a man of little scruple and less foresight who, shark or no shark, refuses to close the beaches of Amity, a fictitious town on Martha's Vineyard, when the Fourth of July weekend is at hand and the crowds are already streaming off the Wood's Hole ferry. Of course, the great fish strikes again and Vaughn becomes known on national TV as the Mayor of Shark City.

The other theme is that of the brave posse that swears to destroy the outlaw or die in the attempt. As always when this business is well managed, the avengers are a picturesque and varied lot, chosen so that everyone in the audience can identify with at least one of them. In addition to Chief Brody, a gentle, ex-New York cop who has the interesting peculiarity that he is terrified of the sea, the men on the hunting boat are Hooper (Richard Dreyfuss) and Quint (Robert Shaw). Dreyfuss (recently of *American Graffiti* and *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*) plays a wealthy young ichthyologist whose appearance of full-bearded and somewhat didactic innocence covers a brave, peppery and often humorous personality. Shaw, his British speech erased by an almost impenetrable New England salt-pork accent, is a shark killer by trade, partly for the money in it, but mainly to even the score for his shipmates who, during World War II, were devoured alive while awaiting rescue in the South China Sea. He it is who is consumed feet first, inch by inch, to make a kind of *Moby Dick* conclusion for the film.

All of this is exceedingly well directed by Steven Spielberg (*Sugarland Express*), a young director who handles crowds with authority, has a sharp sense of timing, knows how to capitalize on the endearing eccentricities of his characters and demands a perfection of workmanship that carries through to the last ashtray and paper cup. In particular, his staging of the hunt for, battle with, and very narrow victory over the shark is as good belly entertainment as the screen ever attains.

But basically, *Jaws* is an excellent routine movie, the sort normally made on a moderate budget and aimed at the neighborhood houses. All the big money was spent to provide the brief flashes of horror, and was gambled on the hunch that those moments—the dismembered leg sinking to the sandy bottom, the dead face in the porthole window, the fragments of a lovely girl spread out on a morgue table, the disappearance of the screaming Quint down the monster's throat—would be, as it were, bread cast upon the waters. And so it is proving; *Jaws* will be one of the historic bonanza films.

This can be made the occasion for a good deal of tut-tutting, the response to the film being offered as proof that ours is a sadly debased society which, in the absence of creative values or the opportunity for enriching goals, hungers after degrading sensation. It may be so, but in that case we are not without precedents. The Romans liked their entertainment bloody, and if that be dismissed as more evidence that vulgar times generate vulgar tastes, recall that Shakespeare resorted to instruments of torture in competition with the bearbaiting and somewhat prolonged public executions of his time. In fact, there has probably never been a time when impressive crowds could not be gathered to view pain or copulation—they are the twin dominant forms of voyeurism—to the extent that the authorities permitted. Until recently, our authorities would permit very little, so there is a large market of those who have built up no immunity to the staging of such matters. Witness the inordinate amount of excitement engendered by *Last Tango in Paris*, a conventional enough bit of rueful sentiment enhanced by several very brief scenes of *outré* eroticism. There will be imitations of *Jaws*, as there were imitations of *Last Tango* and *The Exorcist*; they will be less successful and will find their level in the shabbier houses, as the public by and large discovers the monotony in shock.

Of course, *Jaws* is a kind of pornography, in that it contrives illusions of torment that are entirely unnecessary to its narrative purpose. But pornography, of whatever sort, has the built-in weakness that it manipulates people—the characters and the audience—for the profit of the manufacturer and, after the first screams and gasps have had their turn, this proves to be rather uninteresting to anyone but the manufacturer. It is what people do, not what is done to them, that makes even the most popular theatre seductive.

Which is not to say that the new permissiveness has no lasting effects. The limits of what is acceptable have been extended and the coiners of fiction, when they feel the necessity, can make explicit what hitherto they have had to handle by innuendo. On balance, that seems to me not unhealthy—innuendo being a rather crawly device—but I will be surprised if it often proves essential, or for long profitable, to startle the audience out of its wits in order to gain its respectful attention. Grand Guignol proved to be a limited resource and *Deep Throat* is now the code name for a supernumerary in the Watergate affair. □

THEATRE / Harold Clurman

As its 204th production, the intrepid Arena Stage of Washington, D.C. offered a 1973 Soviet play called *The Ascent of Mount Fuji* by Chingiz Aitmatov and Kaltai Mukhamedzhanov. It was the first play I hastened to see on my return from Europe, immediately prior to its closing on July 6, the reason for my eagerness being curiosity about a recent example of Soviet dramaturgy. On several counts the play was a revelation.

It sets forth Soviet self-criticism unusual in its daring. At the same time, it is subtly self-protective. What emerges is a theme which has an oblique relevance to an American situation and also traits which are markedly and permanently Russian. The theme is guilt over political denunciation—I almost thought of calling the matter a case of betrayal to the "House Un-Soviet Committee"!—while its tone echoes sounds in the plays of Chekhov and Gorky.

The locale is a mountaintop in Kirghizia, a Republic of the Soviet Union in central Asia. (The characters as well as the play's authors are citizens of that Republic.) The mountaintop has been named Mount Fuji by the man in charge of it because, as he explains, the Japanese mountain which he once visited means "sacred mountain," a

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place where every true Buddhist climbs to "submit a report to God." The play's characters are not Buddhists but four wartime pals and their wives who have been invited by one of the men, an agronomist, to a sentimental reunion. Their former schoolteacher has also been asked. This outing becomes the occasion not only for reminiscences about the days of their youth but for self-questioning, which soon leads to mutual recrimination. "Once in a lifetime a man has to be alone with his own conscience," one of the group says. There are repeated references to God: "Your God is your conscience on which people can rely, on which the whole world counts," but we are assured that they are all atheists.

This is what lies on their conscience: during the war when they had dropped out of school to join the army—all were in the same regiment—the most promising of them, a poet, was denounced to the authorities for the "shapeless pacifism" he had expressed in several unpublished poems. The man was removed from the service, though the judgment against him was later reversed and his status as a loyal soldier re-established. But the shock of betrayal by one of his close comrades—though almost all are suspect, we never learn which one had "squealed"—has destroyed him: he was no longer able to fulfill his talent and became a drunkard.

Such "mistakes," it is admitted, are made many times and everyone keeps quiet "when we should speak out." The men are troubled by a common guilt because "we failed to understand Sabur at the moment when his ideas became full of deep internal contradiction. That isn't a crime in an artist—it's his dialectic, his search for the truth"—but at the time of the poet's difficulty "we all kept our mouths shut." Nothing they could have done would have helped, but the fact is, they didn't try to intervene.

One of the wives, an actress, cries out against the men for their "plain, ordinary betrayal." To which the bureaucrat among them replies, "What is done in the interests of the general good can't possibly be called betrayal. History is not made without mistakes." At which someone else rationalizes, "Our history corrected these mistakes by itself. That's when we see its great fairness." Still the self-accusation stands: "We are the ones to blame. And what infuriates in this case is our smug sense of superiority."

And so it goes: after accusation comes justification, which may be construed as a vindication of the state apparatus. But a general criticism goes deeper than the specific instance. It is the disappointment all these people (except the revered old schoolteacher) feel with their lives and careers. The actress, an "Honored Artist of the Republic," is unhappy over the paltriness of the contemporary plays she is obliged to appear in. She berates her writer-husband who, instead of striving for artistic merit, has become little more than a pamphleteer. His defense is "the things I write are what the times command." Fun is poked at a doctor of science who is on his way to associate membership of the Academy. He is a stuffed shirt whose every speech is the correct rote of Soviet ideology. The peasant-like agronomist, untroubled and forthright, declares, "My communism starts in my home, with my children, with my family. They're healthy, they have enough to eat, they have clothes and shoes—which means that everything's all right."

I have cited so much of the text to provide a clue to the play's political and moral bent—its criticism of the regime as well as its forbearance and loyalty. But none of this conveys the play's essential "Russianness"—that peculiar soulfulness, that inwardness and humbly Christian compassion, sorrowfully forgiving, yet given to the constant "philosophizing" that we find in most of the other "atheistic" writers of pre-Soviet times. And this, despite the play's rather stereotyped characters and although the tone has by now become almost conventional, lends it a touching quality.

To avoid the fault Americans most dread in the theatre, "talkiness," Zelda Fichandler as director has forced the energy of the cast into an unrelenting vehemence to give the play the semblance of strong action. In the circumstances, the result is on the whole commendable.

I should add, since this interesting production is no longer on view, the play may be read in a translation by Nicholas Bethell published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

At a new Off-Broadway theatre, the Billy Munk (302 E. 45th St.), Barbara Loden has directed two evenings in alternating performances of six one-act plays by William Inge. They were, to me at least, of special interest.

Inge wrote a considerable number of short pieces, in part to serve as preliminary sketches for what he might eventually elaborate into full-length plays. Most of these hitherto unproduced plays were intended not only to occupy his fallow periods but to relieve the ever growing tensions and torments which besieged him.

The six playlets Barbara Loden chose to present were collectively titled *The Love Death Plays.* They are of unequal merit but, whether comedy or drama, they all possess a certain poignancy. They express resentment against broad aspects of our society. If Inge's commercial successes, *Come Back Little Sheba, Picnic, Bus Stop, The Dark at the Top of the Stairs,* were his pleasant ones, nearly all the later—and posthumous—plays are painful, and in that respect "unpleasant." They are chiefly expressions of failure and collapse.

The most "likable" of those presented at the Billy Munk is a brief dialogue between two men. Here an elderly gentleman from the Middle West comes on a visit to see his sister and brother-in-law in New York. But the city, as indeed nearly everything else in the present time, intimidates him; he cannot abide or understand the tumult and the harshness. As soon as he enters his brother-in-law's apartment, he resolves to leave it and remain quietly by himself. Despite his relatives' cordiality, everything in the environment upsets him. He suffers a strange shrinking from the "new world." There is more gentle pathos in the picture than mockery. Unfortunately, the significance of the old man's character seems to have been missed in the performance: he was played as a decrepit half-wit, instead of a sadly alienated person, a counterpart of Inge's own fear of what he feels everywhere around him: pollution.

Inge's early plays attempted to treat the disruptions of mid-century America with a psychoanalytically inspired benevolence. But as he became more confident of himself through the prestige of acclaim, he ventured to write more boldly in unsparing truthfulness. This tended to make his later plays searing and, in most of the sketches, close to a hate wrought from his ever more acute despair.

Thus *The Love Death,* a monologue movingly acted by Lane Smith, is an open confession of the author's anguish. A novelist whose work has suffered ever increasing rejection decides to end his life by an overdose of sleeping pills. While he administers them, he calls up his mother, his best friend and a critic who has written a venomous review of his latest novel to tell them what he is doing. To his mother he speaks with tender hurt (he refuses to speak to his father because of paternal neglect), with overt love to his friend, with mortified rage to the reviewer. As he is about to die we hear a kid banging on the locked door of the writer's apartment, yelling "Crazy faggot!" This play was written not long before Inge himself committed suicide.

Another sketch deals with the crude hypocrisy of a racist and generally retarded Babbitt who inveighs against "niggers," "commies" and trouble-making youth, and ends with an attempted rape of his brother's girl friend, a foolish "liberal" with whom he has carried on a silly political-social argument. Other of the pieces jibe at the basic lack of genuine connection or fellow feeling, the utter superficiality of personal relations in our everyday life and the fury of the poor against the "proper" well-to-do embodied in a drive to subject such people to sexual humiliation.

The most effective of the last three pieces, well played by Janet Ward, pictures

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the decay of a Broadway star after she has passed her prime: her hysterical reluctance to accept the indignity of applying for unemployment insurance, her recourse to sedatives plus booze and her persistence in still thinking of herself as a "star."

I saw these plays—all (with the one noted exception) intelligently directed and in the main well acted by a well-chosen cast—as a sort of last will and testament. I have always held Inge to be an underestimated playwright: his scope was limited, but he wrote honestly about simple Mid-American people, of whom he had authentic knowledge and a genuine appreciation. He had a thorough command of his craft and never tried to say more than he knew and felt. But his treatment by reviewers was often obtuse, shameful, punitive in a pattern of unconscionable behavior which has embittered the lives of many American artists. There is an ancient saying: "Oh Lord, do not raise me too high only to thrust me down too low." □

ART

LAWRENCE ALLOWAY

Edwin Ruda's paintings will be the first exhibition after the summer at Paula Cooper's gallery. Ruda's art in the 1960s moved from long lean hard-edge diamond shaped canvases to amply painted gestural pictures. His new paintings, the best since the elongated diamonds, depend on a format of clear lines of varying length and hue almost spanning the pictures, usually from top to bottom. The lines are misted over, but not hidden, by a wash of color in the large central zone from which they emerge onto either bare canvas or solid color. The visual display is subtle and the color delicate, but Ruda is not aiming at decoration. He certainly has a grave meaning in mind for his pictures. However, the early 20th-century defense against decoration, equating abstract geometry with Platonic form, is hardly reputable now. Since Ruda avoids signification in the usual sense I have to presume a function for his art like that ascribed by John Dewey to art: "Paintings when taken out of their specialized niche are the basis of an educational experience which counteracts the disrupting tendencies of the hard-and-fast specializations, compartmental divisions and rigid segregations which so confuse and nullify our present life."

Here a work of art is justified by its status as a model of order, an emblem of integration. However, if this idea is true it can be extended to all art, not just to Abstract art. The image of the state of wholeness has to be earned by each artist individually and can certainly include representational art. Thus Ruda's paintings, strongly felt and long pondered as they are, have a problematic aspect. Is the order they symbolize merely general to art or specific to abstraction? Does the fact that his paintings are so visually engaging enhance their decorative value to a point that puts present pleasure in the place of the moral model?

Skeptical questions of this sort are more urgent now than a few years ago. Why? What has changed? The difference lies in the decline of the authority of Abstract painting, so strong in the 1950s and 1960s, but now more vulnerable. For one thing there are competitors, external enemies so to say, artists working in opposed styles—representational, expressionistic and political. The alternatives that they represent were simply not taken seriously in the 1960s, but now they demand attention and their aesthetics put Abstract aesthetics under pressure.

A more serious matter, however, is what appears to me an internal weakness of Abstract painters themselves. It is worth remembering that Abstract painting started around 1911 and has proliferated ever since. It has been developed by generations of international artists, born between the 1870s and the 1940s. There has been a succession of new movements as well as revivals of former styles, as Abstract art developed its own web of contacts and traditions. Groups include: *Der Blaue Reiter, De Stijl,* the Bauhaus, Création-Abstraction. Abstract Expressionism, Color Field Painting and Lyrical Abstraction.

Abstract painters, therefore, have a recently formed but elaborate inheritance with which to cope. Abstract painting has gone from an early phase of heroic innovation to the learned complexities of a late style of art in sixty years. In this time discovery has been honed to expertise, guesswork has solidified into doctrine, and individualism has turned into club membership. The early European Abstract artists gave up images of the world because they were in search of a "deeper" reality. The American Abstract Expressionists had an equally exalted goal—to realize an existential image of man by means of gestural painting or to achieve monumentality by a modern version of the sublime. The generation that followed (born in the 1920s and 1930s) accomplished a salutary rinsing of art. They got rid of high passion (Barnett Newman), emotional projection (Jackson Pollock), and *absurd* ambition (Willem de Kooning). With painting rendered literal and object-like two risks emerged: taking the place of improvisation the mechanics of picture making became too evident; and decorative elements expanded unweighted by traditional humanist content. Hence the problem of a serious Abstract painter like Ruda trying to reconcile a scrupulous sense of the physiognomy of painting with a hankering for solemn utterance.

The style changes in his development are indicative of a search for meaning, but other painters' mobility is often more superficial. A painter like Larry Zox (who had a retrospective at the Whitney Museum a year or so back) turned from imitating Frank Stella to imitating Jules Olitski when materiality of pigment seemed to replace hard-edge as a topical imperative. Even Stella with his brilliant early success in making the Abstract Expressionists look nostalgic and sentimental by comparison to his tough early monochromes, has revealed a wayward development. He has tried a succession of styles, none of which seems to have provided him with a center.

It seems that development is a problem for artists working in the styles of late Abstract painting. There is a question: have other people the right to judge artists' developments while they are still in progress? Since exhibition schedules bring artists before the public on a regular basis year after year we are almost forced to appraise them as they go. We compare them not only with other artists but with their own histories. Consistency is one quality one looks for in an *oeuvre* and Poussin and Mondrian, for example, reveal this. Renewal is no less essential and again Poussin and Mondrian are exemplary. I remember in the Poussin exhibition at the Louvre years ago looking at three paintings of Apollo in which the meaning of the presence of the god varied according to the period in Poussin's life at which each was painted. A comparable pattern of rigor and revision also underlies Mondrian's apparently monotonous style.

According to such criteria I would say that Ellsworth Kelly and Helen Frankenthaler have developed with neither restless deviation nor undue repetition. Typical interrupted developments characterize the work in time of Friedl Dzubas, Larry Poons, Theodoros Stamos, Stella, Neil Williams and Zox. On the other hand, mechanical consistency without authentic renewal can be deadening, as in the case of Kenneth Noland whose sequential development is timid rather than structural. That such developmental problems may have a stylistic cause, the problem of being a latecomer in a depleted field, is suggested by a comparison with Pop artists of the same generation. Jasper Johns, Roy Lichtenstein, Claes Oldenburg, Robert Rauschenberg, James Rosenquist, Andy Warhol and Tom Wesselman all show developmental curves in which past activity and present possibility imply the future confidently, which is just what is lacking from Abstract painting. □

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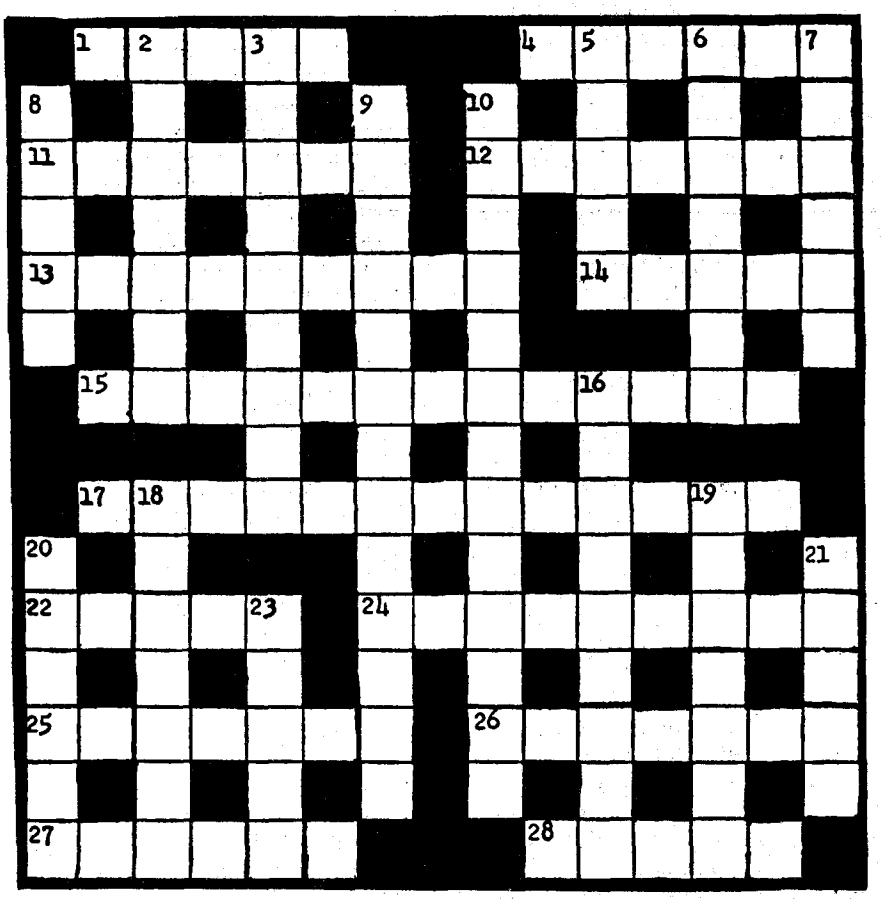
Crossword Puzzle No. 1596

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 Some carpenters, perhaps, but not joiners, aren't very pleasant superficially. (5)
4 See 12 across
11 In making a strict diagnosis, you might consider it belonging to the stomach. (7)
12 and 4 across Ring-maker. (7,6)
13 Revolving digits. (9)
14 Following exercise? (5)
15 Day-old play, evidently. (4,9)
17 Stand up and be counted, with less of eastern revolutionary movement. (6,7)
22 See 6 down.
24 With broken outer ends, things go to pot this way. (3,2,4)
25 Implying too much of the type to spread and take possession. (7)
26 A beetle couldn't be a cockroach! (7)
27 It's due, perhaps, to be carried out. (6)
28 Smetana's was bartered. (5)

DOWN

2 Coins, as flipped in a game. (7)
3 Probably involves squares, though called figures here. (4,5)
5 Tie in a race, at least one in a race. (5)
6 and 22 across Just a drop of water, or a lot more. (7,5)
7 When not on foot, I would shortly get in the circle. (6)
8 One entrance might be stone. (5)
9 Something unplanned and unpleasant leads to lying—but such a type might be expensive to cover. (8-5)
10 In the ring, they fling this in a way that's mildly terrific! (13)
16 Asking for Juncus to get here as quickly as possible? (4,5)
18 A foreigner in a little way outstanding. (7)
19 Bedelia is made up, but certainly not as an Early Bird! (3-4)
20 A loud way to come across, and bear the expense. (6)
21 Our present year and all our years might be proverbial. (5)
23 Possibly good material for Koussevitsky. (5)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 1595

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